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ABSTRACT

This document reports how a writing/communication curriculum for incarcerated adults was developed in response to an informal survey taken at the Schuylkill County (Pennsylvania) Prison. Findings from students in the 1990-91 adult basic education course indicated that prisoners evidenced low-level writing skills, an apathetic attitude toward the community, and obvious lack of self-esteem. The eight-page report is followed by these appendixes: writing sample evaluation scale, self-evaluation survey, community service survey, student release form, sample recruitment flyer, and selected post-course student comments. Two other publications are included. The first is a collection of writings by prisoners/students. Their life stories appear first. The writings show the inmates' regret for the sorrow their actions have caused loved ones, their despair of ever leading a "normal" life, and desire to prevent other youth from falling into the pitfalls that led them to their present condition: making poor choices, bowing to peer pressure, and rebelling with misplaced youthful spirit. The second publication is the curriculum guide. It provides the following: objectives, a materials list, time requirement, and directions for 30 classes; listening skills worksheets; sample tributes; selected aphorisms; similes and metaphors information sheets; writing sample evaluation scale; self-evaluation scale; community service survey; sample student release form; and sample recruitment flyer. (YLB)

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A Writing/Communications Curriculum for Incarcerated Adults

A 353 Project Final Report

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A Writing/Communications Curriculum for Incarcerated Adults

A 353 Project Final Report

Submitted by: Lyn Leto
Coordinator of Special Services
The Schuylkill Intermediate Unit #29

Fiscal Year: 1991 - 1992

Grantee: The Schuylkill Intermediate Unit #29
P.O. Box 130, Maple Avenue
Mar Lin, PA 17951-0130

Federal Grant: $5,190.00
Project Number: 98-2021

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ABSTRACT

Surveys of inmates in county prisons have indicated that a large percentage (60% and higher) have dropped out of school before graduation and/or had problems with substance abuse. Prison counselors also report that most incarcerated adults show evidence of low self-esteem and alienation from their communities. These conditions directly or indirectly impacted on their eventual incarceration.

The main goal of this curriculum is the development of improved writing skills motivated by the performance of a community service - a self-actualizing task normally denied prisoners by virtue of their incarceration. Oral communications skills, specifically in helping situations, will be interpolated throughout the course with the development of effective writing skills. Communication skills, both oral and written, will be shown to be a vehicle to a fulfilling, productive life upon parole - whether in an organized community service or one-on-one relations encountered daily in everyday life.

This curriculum aims to form a bonding between inmates and at least one part of society, at-risk youth. It will also aid incarcerated adults familiarize themselves with various community resources, hopefully helping each find one in which he or she would like to serve, once paroled. At the very least, students of this curriculum will be able to refer people in various difficult life situations to the appropriate agencies.

The opportunity for setting a goal and seeing it though to fruition is also here. It is present in the development of communication skills which will be evidenced in the finished product - a book for area at-risk students in all county school districts.

INTRODUCTION

Any informal survey taken at the Schuylkill County Prison using the students from the 1990-91 ABE course indicated that the prisoners evidenced low-level writing skills. In addition, they were not motivated to become effective communicators as they could see no practical reason to do so. - In addition, a sense of apathy was easily observable in regards to their community - the thought of making a societal contribution was of no interest. Furthermore, when asked the open-ended question, "What do you, as an individual with many experiences, have to offer the community in a positive vein?", 100% of the sample answered "nothing".

Utilizing survey results - a lack of interest in improving writing, an apathetic attitude toward the community and obvious lack of self-esteem evidenced in the belief that they had nothing positive to offer others, "A Writing/Communications Curriculum for Incarcerated Adults" was born.

The curriculum was written between September and December of 1991. Students were recruited through posters, flyers, and the active participation of the prison counseling staff during December/and the first two weeks in January. Prerequisites for entering the class were a minimum stay at the correctional facility for at least ten weeks, the length of the curriculum; a history of substance abuse and/or dropping out of school; the willingness to delve into painful life experiences in order to help youth avoid the same pitfalls into which the inmates fell; and a desire to develop a talent that they could ultimately utilize through participation in a community service.

It is hoped that this report may aid other educators in the corrections field to assist incarcerated adults in developing much-needed communication skills and an awareness of their own ability to make societal contributions using their newly-developed talents and their own life experiences.

The Division of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Programs
The Pennsylvania Department of Education
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THE BODY OF THE REPORT

The problem of societal alienation is illustrated in late twentieth century America in the following observations: TV watching takes precendence during leisure time over interpersonal communications for the vast majority of citizens; locked doors and a distrust of our fellow-men has become a way of life; sitting on the front porch on a balmy summer night to chat with neighbors has been replaced by TV watching - in fact, it is not unusual today in many communities to not know the neighbors at all; church affiliation has fallen to an all-time low; the two-worker family has replaced the "Beaver Cleaver" household as a way of American life - mothers and their children no longer spend very much time in staying intimately connected; the high mobility rate, combined with more frequent changes in occupations has almost annihilated the extended family which was once a source of emotional support and a sense of belonging; the high divorce rate has helped develop a situation for many children where they have more than one mother or father or perhaps a never ending stream of mothers and families which breaks down the sense of security and continuity which once helped stabilize American society.

Given the aforementioned, now almost the norm of American life, the bonding which was normally thought to take place in a family is brought into question, and a sense of belonging within one's community is brought into disrepute. Therefore, that particular group of citizens, the incarcerated adults, can be expected to feel a great alienation from family and community, and a lesser desire for academic success is endemic to them by virtue of their acti-social acts which have placed them formally outside of the community.

The inmate population of America, especially those found in county prisons, will once again be living in society. Therefore, it behooves the allegedly law-abiding citizenry to support the re-entry into community life of these soon to be "ex-cons" through education.

In order to fight the problems of community disinterest, lack of educational goals, low self-esteem and the resulting anti-social behavior of our county prison inmates, we set the following goals and objectives:

1. Teach the targeted group that they can improve their academic skills, namely writing. Educational research now strongly supports the idea that (Reading comprehension is strongly correlated with writing proficiency.

2. Demonstrate that proper writing can be used in a pragmatic way to help society.

3. Demonstrate the need for community service in many areas, and a specific area where they can use their negative experiences in a positive fashion - helping many anonymous, at-risk youth stay in school and avoid drugs/alcohol.

4. Provide the opportunity for inmates to perform a community service and to see the results of their work in a concrete fashion - a beautifully illustrated book written by them.

5. Provide opportunities for feedback from the students that they may have reached by encouraging at-risk youth to write to the "author" whose material was the most emotionally meaningful to him/her. The writer will disover how his or her authorship has positively affected student attitudes towards the avoidance of substance abuse.

The evaluation instruments used are contained at the end of the report. They are:

a) The Writing Sample Evaluation Scale

b) The Self-Evaluation Survey (to measure pre and post course self-esteem

c) The Community Service Survey

RESULTS

- Pre and Post course writing samples showed an average improvement of 19 points.

- The Self-Evaluation Survey measuring self-esteem pre and post course, increased, on the average, by 9 points.

- The Community Service Survey showed an average of a 50% increase in knowledge about the concept of community service and service agencies available as resources for county residents.

OBSERVATIONS

1. The Seventeen (17) incarcerated adults who entered the program were more concerned with making a contribution to county youths than they were in improving their writing skills. Altruism appeared to be the great motivator, although results showed significant gains in writing skills.

2. Students enjoyed guest speakers from various agencies. They were interested in what they had to say, and, subjectively, the class, in its entirety, appeared surprised and flattered that agency representatives looked to them to offer their services, upon parole, in helping others.

3. A noticeable positive bonding was observed after two weeks time. At this point the class began to be steadfast in their goal of using their life experiences in youths from following in their footsteps.

4. Although the class started with seventeen (17) adults, four students dropped out after the first two weeks. They related that they did not feel comfortable with the introspection and communication required by the course.

5. Many students expressed the feeling that the class helped them grow emotionally through the ownership of their own poor decision-making processes that they had previously displayed. Many said that they felt "dead" or "numb" inside before their experiences in this class.

6. The role playing activities contained in the curriculum were a great success with the students. More of this activity should be added to this curriculum if it were to be replicated.

7. The curriculum centered on substance abuse and premature separation from school. A future course should probably explore other topics in writing assignments such as: the dysfunctional family; incest, emotional abuse; peer pressure; and decision-making skills. Students appeared to lose some of their initial zeal because of the limited topics for discussion and composition.

The following pages contain essential components for course implementation:

1. Writing Sample Evaluation Scale
2. Self Evaluation Survey
3. Community Service Survey
4. Student Release Form
5. Sample Recruitment Flyer

Selected post-course comments from students are included in the final pages in order to demonstrate the emotional impact that this course had on the class.

VIDEO COMPONENT

Although not included in the 353 proposal, a video was made by members of the class who wished to have the opportunity to make their stories even more personal. The project director felt that the video, when used in conjunction with the book in schools, would add authenticity and personalize the message of these inmates. The video portrays a real flesh and blood drug-dealer, not the fire-breathing dragon of popular screeen presentations, but a pathetic addict who supported his habit through the sale of drugs. His actions were wrong. The man the students see is a beaten man, a man literally ruined by his deal with the devil - drugs.

The video, through all of it's gritty reality and non-professional quality, gives a chilly look into the aftermath of the good-times, halcyon drug days - incarceration, broken dreams, and familial and personal disappointment.

The sincerity of these inmates is evident; it is heart-wrenching to see a young man cry for the person that might have been.

Students do not see drugs glorified, but, rather they see the very opposite - the crude cruel after affects. For these prisoners, the party is ended, forevery over.

This report and the projects' products - a curriculum guide and the inmate-penned and illustrated booklet - is available to AdvancE. The project coordinator also hopes to present this project, its findings and its products at the 1993 Midwinter Conference. The coordinator will also be available for presentation to any groups that may want to attempt the same or similar project.

PROJECT 353 1991-92

A WRITING/COMMUNICATIONS CURRICULUM

FOR INCARCERATED ADULTS

WRITING SAMPLE EVALUATION SCALE

	POINTS
Goal Appropriate	10
Adherence to Topic	10
Sentence Development	10
Paragraph Development	10
Syntax	10
Clarity of Expression	10
Punctuation	5
Creativity in Style and Expression	5
Aptness of Title	5
Legibility	5
Spelling	5
TOTAL	**90**

SELF EVALUATION SURVEY

(True or False, in your opinion)

1.	I feel that I am a good person	_____
2.	I feel that I have the ability to improve myself.	_____
3.	I enjoy helping others.	_____
4.	I am good at listening to others' problems.	_____
5.	I always take the opportunity to do something nice for another person.	_____
6.	I would change my life if I could.	_____
7.	I put others' needs before my own.	_____
8.	I would make sacrifices in order to make life better for another human being.	_____
9.	I believe that, as human beings, we all possess some good in us.	_____
10.	I realize that I am an important person having talents which I can put to positive use.	_____

The Self-Evaluation Survey is scored by giving one point for every "True" statement. Therefore, the score will be 0 - 10, with registering a high self esteem, 0 equaling little or no self-esteem.

Therefore, in gauging growth, a "6" on the pre-test and an "8" on the post-test shows a growth of "2" or 20%, while an "8" on the pre-test and a "6" on the post-test indicate a diminution of "2" or 20% in the student's self-esteem.

COMMUNITY SERVICE SURVEY

Name _____

Date _____

1. Community Service is _____

_____

_____

_____

2. Five examples of organized community service are: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Five community organizations that can be found in our area and the services that they provide are:

Organizations	**Services provided**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. I think that I would like to help _____
(one type of person or a group)
when I am released from prison in the following way(s): _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. I have the most empathy for people who have the following problems:

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Five types of community service that I could perform on my own without being involved in an organization:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NEW AND EXPERIMENTAL CLASS TO BE OFFERED BY

THE SCHUYLKILL INTERMEDIATE UNIT

WHO: Inmates who have had drug and/or alcohol related problems which contributed in some way to their imprisonment.

Inmates who dropped out of school before graduation and have had difficulties because of this. (Even is they have since earned a GED).

Inmates who fit into one or both of the above categories and have a strong desire to help today's teenagers through their experiences.

WHY: Learn to express yourself through writing and verbal communications.

Make a contribution to society through helping today's youth by sharing your own experiences.

WHERE: Prison library

WHEN: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
12:30 - 2:30 p.m. beginning January
through the end of March

If you are interested, please register now. The class is limited to a maximum of 20.

During a ten week period beginning in January, 1992 and ending March, 1992, I participated in a demonstration project for the Schuylkill Intermediate Unit #29. The project's goal was to produce a booklet of personal writings composed by all of us in this course. The booklet would then be distributed to "at-risk" students in the county through the Intermediate Unit.

During this time some of us gave testimonials that were videotaped in order to be used in substance abuse prevention programs in various schools and also in some community presentations in order to heighten awareness of the ever-present drug/alcohol menace to our county youth.

- -

I, _____, presently an inmate in
(Name)
Schuylkill County Prison, give my consent to use my writings on the negative aspects of substance abuse and/or dropping out of school, to be used in the county and around the state to help youth and adults learn more about the dangers involved in these practices.

_____ _____
(Signature) (Date)

- -

I, _____, presently an inmate in
(Name)
the Schuylkill County Prison grant my permission to use my video testimonial to be used in programs in the county and the state in order to prevent substance abuse of youth and to enlighten adults of the dangers to which their children may be exposed.

_____ _____
(Signature) (Date)

Randy Williams
Schuylkill County Prison
Pottsville, PA 17901

Dear Ms. Leto:

Since the end of our creative writing class, I feel like a part of me is missing.

Not only a part of me is missed, but also your occupational visit and words of encouragement are missed, and no doubt, Ms. Cathy is missed. You gals were an inspiration and a great help.

For now, all I can say is thank you. This thank you is from the heart.

After our remake of our video, we have never heard from you. Now I wonder how it had turned out. Also, I am wondering about our book we had written. If possible, would you please give me an update on it? I'd appreciate it very much.

Please give Ms. Cathy my best and Happy Easter to both of you.

Sincerely,

Randy Williams

A Fresh Start

The "Creative Writing Class" has been very educational for the entire class, as well as myself. I'm glad I had the pleasure of being a part of it all.

This class made me realize quite a few things about myself that I didn't know existed until now.

When I leave these prison walls, I'll be better prepared for the world outside. I cam here with an attitude which no longer controls me.

I feel I have prepared my life for a new beginning. Opportunity knocks once for some. I know it was God who has given me another chance,

I know I'm not going to go out there and blow it. I'm much stronger now than I've ever been. My own family doesn't support my way of thinking, but I know in my heart, that I'm right.

When I close my cell door forever, my name will be just a memory around here. When I am home that cell will be a permanent reminder of what I went through in the 90 days I spent here.

The heartache, the guilt and the loss of so much, all add up to pain. I knew it was up to me to make it all right.

Now that I'm gone, I hope a few will remember me for what I've accomplished in this establishment.

by Cathy Klipola

Dear Lyn,

I'm writing for a few different reasons, one was to say hello, and tell you that I miss you guys. I also wanted to know how the book and video is working out with the kids.

I was up in Schuylkill County last week and _____ gave me a copy of the book; it brought tears to my eyes when I read it again. I felt like we only touched the surface about how bad it really gets using drugs, but I guess there's a fine line talking to kids, and really telling it like it is with all the sickness, perversion and the obscene, dirty low-live way of life that substance-abuse entails. I hope that someone got the message.

I really do want to change and I really do need help. I don't want to keep coming back to jail. I want to have a life with my own kids - Oh, I don't know!

Whenever I do get out I'll stop by to see you guys and see the kids in person, with your permission, of course.

Take care and thanks for the opportunity of allowing me to participate in your project.

Tom Almonti

Randy Williams
Schuylkill County Prison
Pottsville, PA 17901

Dear Ms. Leto:

I am writing in regards to the video that we made here at the county prison.

I'm almost sure you don't recall me by name, Randy Williams, but you might recall me from the first one to do the video. I'm the guy who cried.

Anyway, I realize the guys and girls here wanted to see that video, but if you show them, I'd appreciate you not showing them my part in the video.

I'm no longer the tough guy that I once was. I'm just a man with a lot of shame and regret.

It's not easy being here under those conditions. I really don't need for those guys to see how really weak I am by seeing me cry in that video. I hope you can understand how I feel.

If I was on the outside, I would not care who sees me cry. I'd be thankful for those tears because of there healing power. But in prison, inmates have a tendency to pray on the weak, and I'm not going to let that happen to me.

Also, if you are interested, I'd like to make another video. Something on the order of that one Sudsy made on D.U.I., but instead of alcohol, drugs.

Well, think about it and please get back to me on it.

If there is anyway you can use me and past experiences to help children in any way, please let me know and I'll do anything possible to help, that's a promise from my heart.

I thank you for your time and I thank you for the help that you, Cathy, and whoever else is involved in Creative Writing has given me.

Sincerely yours,

Randy Williams

"EXPERIENCE IS A FINE TEACHER, BUT SHE SENDS IN TERRIFIC BILLS."

LEARN FROM US!

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A community service effort by the residents of the Schuylkill County Prison, 1992
Sponsored by a grant from The Pennsylvania Department of Education

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Credits:
Illustrations by Robert "Red" Schweikert

Thank you to Warden David Kurtz and The Schuylkill County Prison Staff for their cooperation in this venture

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse and drug sales are, unfortunately, an integral part of modern society. Even though Schuylkill County is a rural area, it is not immune from the consequences of drug and alcohol abuse -- dropping out of school; sexual behavior leading to unplanned pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases; crimes committed in order to support a habit; inhabiting the demimonde of the drug pusher, and further perpetrating societal malaise.

Those of us in the so-called straight world often think of criminals incarcerated as a result of vices related to drugs and alcohol as somehow sub-human. However, all of the Schuylkill County prisoners who participated in the 353 project "A Writing/Communications Curriculum for Incarcerated Adults" give the lie to this stereotypical image of the "worthless druggie".

A study of the content of this book will show the hearts of these inmates -- regretting the sorrow that their actions have caused their loved ones; despairing of ever being able to lead a "normal" life because of their additions; wallowing in self-recrimination rather than blaming anyone else; and, most importantly, desiring to prevent other youths from falling into the same pitfalls that led them to their present condition: making poor choices; bowing to peer pressure; confusing friendship with a drugged camaraderie; rebelling with misplaced youthful spirit leading them to ignore constructive advice from family and teachers.

The authors of this book were all born into this world like all of our children -- innocent, trusting, filled with potential for happiness. Somewhere along the way, and often at very young ages, a wrong corner was turned which led them down the path to their present residence -- The Schuylkill County Jail.

I've met these people, and I've listened to them. I heard and internalized their stories. I also learned to love them, not because they are saints or sinners, but because they all possess a humanity which is palpable and touching. Their humanness touched mine. Their generosity of spirit, evidenced in their sincere eagerness to help other youth avoid their destinies was an inadvertent gift to me: a glimpse into their lives which helped me turn the corner towards non-judgementalism. Their efforts were motivated by no personal gains to themselves, except the joy that any human being feels in knowing maybe, just maybe, he or she can make a positive difference in the life of another.

Their writings are poignant for their sincerity. A careful reading produces both insight and understanding.

Much of this work was extremely emotionally draining for these people. Many cried. Others didn't, but wanted to.

Thank you, members of "The Writing/Communications Workshop for Incarcerated Adults, Project 353, 1991-92". You are much appreciated and loved. My gift to you is the famous and inspirational "DESIDERATA"

Sincerely,

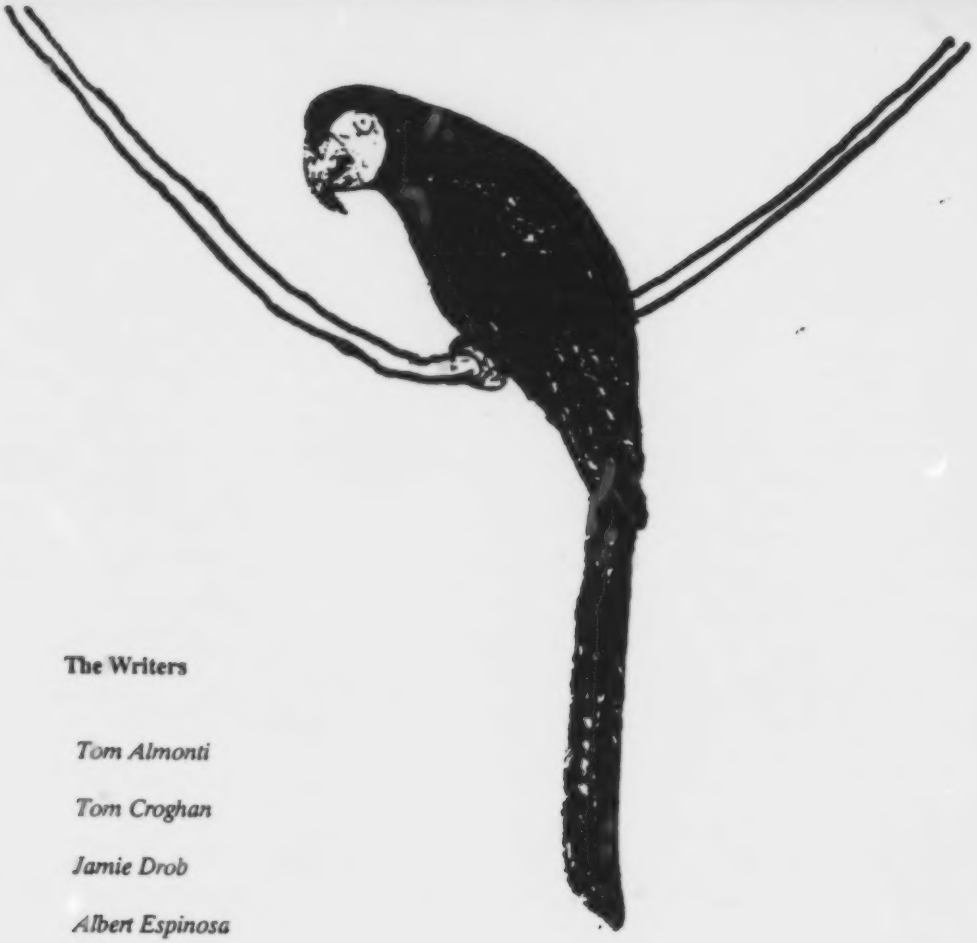
Lyn Leto

Lyn Leto
Project Coordinator
Schuylkill Intermediate Unit #29

"DESIDERATA"

GO PLACIDLY AMID THE NOISE AND HASTE, AND REMEMBER WHAT PEACE THERE MAY BE IN SILENCE. AS FAR AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT SURRENDER BE ON GOOD TERMS WITH ALL PERSONS. SPEAK YOUR TRUTH QUIETLY AND CLEARLY; AND LISTEN TO OTHERS, EVEN THE DULL AND THE IGNORANT; THEY TOO HAVE THEIR STORY. AVOID LOUD AND AGGRESSIVE PERSONS, THEY ARE VEXATIONS TO THE SPIRIT. IF YOU COMPARE YOURSELF WITH OTHERS, YOU MAY BECOME VAIN AND BITTER; FOR ALWAYS THERE WILL BE GREATER AND LESSER PERSONS THAN YOURSELF. ENJOY YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS AS WELL AS YOUR PLANS. KEEP INTERESTED IN YOUR OWN CAREER, HOWEVER HUMBLE; IT IS A REAL POSSESSION IN THE CHANGING FORTUNES OF TIME. EXERCISE CAUTION IN YOUR BUSINESS AFFAIRS; FOR THE WORLD IS FULL OF TRICKERY. BUT LET THIS NOT BLIND YOU TO WHAT VIRTUE THERE IS; MANY PERSONS STRIVE FOR HIGH IDEALS; AND EVERYWHERE LIFE IS FULL OF HEROISM. BE YOURSELF. ESPECIALLY, DO NOT FEIGN AFFECTION. NEITHER BE CYNICAL ABOUT LOVE; FOR IN THE FACE OF ALL ARIDITY AND DISENCHANTMENT IT IS PERENNIAL AS THE GRASS. TAKE KINDLY THE COUNSEL OF THE YEARS, GRACEFULLY SURRENDERING THE THINGS OF YOUTH. NURTURE STRENGTH OF SPIRIT TO SHIELD YOU IN SUDDEN MISFORTUNE. BUT DO NOT DISTRESS YOURSELF WITH IMAGININGS. MANY FEARS ARE BORN OF FATIGUE AND LONELINESS. BEYOND A WHOLESOME DISCIPLINE, BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF. YOU ARE A CHILD OF THE UNIVERSE, NO LESS THAN THE TREES AND THE STARS; YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE HERE. AND WHETHER OR NOT IT IS CLEAR TO YOU, NO DOUBT THE UNIVERSE IS UNFOLDING AS IT SHOULD. THEREFORE BE AT PEACE WITH GOD, WHATEVER YOU CONCEIVE HIM TO BE, AND WHATEVER YOUR LABORS AND ASPIRATIONS, IN THE NOISY CONFUSION OF LIFE KEEP PEACE WITH YOUR SOUL. WITH ALL ITS SHAM, DRUDGERY AND BROKEN DREAMS, IT IS STILL A BEAUTIFUL WORLD. BE CAREFUL. STRIVE TO BE HAPPY.

FOUND IN OLD SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH, BALTIMORE; DATED 1692



The Writers

Tom Almonti

Tom Croghan

Jamie Drob

Albert Espinosa

Lisa Gaughan

Cathy Kipola

Mike Ramer

John Sadusky

Bob Schweikert

Gerry Shrive

Bill Stephens

James Weitzel

Randy Williams

Tom's Story

I grew up in the Borough of the Bronx in New York. The Bronx gave me an attitude and I soon evidenced signs of being quick-tempered. At the age of 10 my family moved to Long Island which was at the time pretty rural.

The change in school systems was quite devastating to me. So, in rebellion I started hanging around with gangs. By the time I was 14, I became a member of the most popular gang in the area. Drinking was the biggest pastime. Although I finished high school, I had to face a tough challenge.

At age 18 I was drafted into the military service. While serving in the military, I had to do everything possible to make myself a tough guy: Airborne, Range, and Special Forces. To top it off, I became a Drill Instructor. This was all accomplished by age 26.

After, my tours in Viet Nam, my violent temper became worse, and to compound the problems, I was mentally fighting. I allowed alcohol to rule my life. During the time of my alcohol abuse, I lost my wife and children through divorce. At this time, I realized that I needed help. At age 33, I enrolled in counseling sessions which helped me set priorities.

Now, at age 39, I am engaged to be married, and I try to let my children know that violence and booze are not the answers. Being mild-mannered can accomplish more, and violence will only either hurt yourself or someone else. I have become more understanding of other's needs. I now try to set an example of love of people and helping those in need.

Jerry's Story

I was born in 1954. When I was in first grade, I had to watch my alcoholic father beating on my pregnant mother. My father held my mother's head under the A-Frame of a 1953 Pontiac. He was trying to work the jack handle to lower the car on my mother's head. My father was trying to crush her. I received many beatings during this time for things that I didn't do.

My parents divorced when I was 11 years old. For a few years before this, I had been living with my grandmother. After my parents' divorce became final, my father remarried.

I then moved in with my father and stepmother. My father had stopped drinking. But my stepmother made life pure hell for me. She made Cinderella's stepmother look like an angel. She beat me constantly, with anything she could get her hands on. She even went so far as to pay someone to try and kill me.

I finally ran away from this situation at the age of 16. I went back to my grandmother's. Six months later, I almost died in the hospital. I eventually had to have a leg amputated as a result of mistreatment that I received.

A few years later I got married. It lasted for a little over 10 years. Then I could not put up with my wife's running around on me anymore. So I left. There were three children born to my wife during this time. If they were biologically mine or not, I still don't know. All this pain helped lead me to crime.

Now, I am sitting in a prison cell, hoping to help someone else to stay out of trouble.

Bob's Story

I was born in a small town, being the youngest of three children. My father died when I was seven. My mother tried very hard to raise my brother, sister, and me. It was very hard for her to do it alone, so she started a relationship which she thought would help with the kids. As time went on, her boyfriend turned out to be abusive to me and to the rest of the family.

I started having trouble in school. I began acting ignorant and was uncaring of others. I would skip school to get drunk and do dope with my friends. I then was kicked out of school.

Then somehow, one day my mom ended the relationship with her abusive boyfriend and I, my mom, brother, and sister moved to a different area. Then I had more freedom and took advantage of it. I started getting myself into all kinds of trouble. I was being arrested every week and my mother couldn't do much about it, because she had to work nights to provide for the children.

Then my mother re-married and we all moved into the step-father's home. Then things really went out of control. I was abusing alcohol heavily, along with cocaine and methamphetamines and marijuana. The family tried to talk to me about this but I didn't want to discuss the matter with anyone. I had a good-paying job, which I lost due to my uncontrollable drinking and drug intake. I then didn't bother looking for a job, and was soon told that I would have to leave my step-father's home.

So I tried cutting back on the drugs and alcohol for awhile. I got my own apartment, a new job, and was doing alright for sometime. Then I started right back up with the drugs and alcohol. Again I couldn't manage my money and then I was on the streets.

But luckily, one of my friends offered me a job and a place to stay for awhile. But it was up to me to end my severe drug intake. So I once again cut back on the drugs but was still heavy into the alcohol.

I got a choice to move to Minnesota. One of my friends was moving and asked if I wanted to go along and try to start a new life. I figured that this was my big chance to change my life around.

But as it turned out, I eventually resumed my old ways. I was working 15 1/2 hours a day, but still heavily abusing alcohol daily. I then started to take alot of LSD. Then my roommate disappeared with all my money. So rather than be homeless in an unfamiliar area, I returned to my home area and once again started my old habits. I am now in prison for stealing a car while under the influence of drugs and alcohol where I am attending a class to improve my writing while helping other kids avoid the traps that I fell into.

I want to attend art school someday and want to start a new life, but it's impossible to do while being in prison and will be difficult after parole because I will be an "ex-con" forever.

James's Story

I was born in 1963, was one of two adopted children, and never knew my biological parents. I started abusing drugs and alcohol at age 12 and by the time I was 14 I had been arrested twice and released into the custody of my adopted parents who never seemed to let men forget that fact, that I was just that, **adopted.**

My juvenile delinquency continued until at the age of 17 I was back into the custody of my adopted parents, a place where I had absolutely no intention of staying. So I took it upon my own to leave home and basically wander around the county for approximately two years, with absolutely no direction in my life. With no family and few friends I decided that I was going nowhere fast, so I stole a vehicle and proceeded to drive it to Florida where I was arrested for that act.

I was given a 10-year sentence for that crime. I was incarcerated for 5 1/2 years and then released into the same circumstances as before, maybe worse. No job, no home, no family, and after 5 1/2 years of incarceration, no friends. To dull the pain of a purposeless existence, I then turned to the use of heroin on a daily basis. I was arrested approximately two years later and am currently incarcerated.

Randy's Story

As a youth, I was constantly in trouble. Defying authority, stealing and just doing what I wanted. Too many step-fathers moved in and I didn't like the idea of them telling me what to do. Not one was my father.

I have been drinking since as long as I can remember. My step-father allowed it, but I don't have a drinking problem and I'm glad that I'm not an alcoholic like him.

I was always a smart child, but during my fourth year in school something happened. I changed completely and began failing until I dropped out in my 10th year. I worked a few odd jobs but nothing worked out, and at 17 years old I ended up in prison.

Then for the next 7 years I sat in prison. Most of this time was boring and unproductive, until I decided I wanted an education and a trade. So I got both. I passed the G.E.D. and had a 3-month course in offset printing. Now I'm involved in a community service helping at-risk students by telling my story about my problems in life. Hopefully someday, I'll be able to offer and devote more time to this matter.

Cathy's Story

I was an abused child for as long as I can remember. My father was an alcoholic. I was the oldest of three children. My mother found it difficult to raise three children and take care of an abusive husband.

When I was 12 years old I was placed in an institution for bad kids. My mother felt that it was best for me to leave home for my own protection from my father's beatings.

My mother died from breast cancer when I was 15. By the age of 16, I was pregnant with my first child. I had to quit school in 11th grade because pregnant girls were not allowed to stay in school. By the time I was 18 I had married and had another child. My marriage was failing when I became pregnant a third time. My husband and I stayed together for a short time after, only for the sake of the new baby. I finally ended that marriage when the new baby was 2 years old.

I was a single parent left to raise three children on my own. With no experience in the job world, I was on welfare for 10 years after my divorce. I had bouts of depression and resorted to alcohol.

I became the same abusive parent as my father had been to me. My two boys had been in and out of foster homes because I couldn't cope with the problems of raising children on my own.

When I was 31 years old, my father shot himself. I began drinking heavier and more frequently. My relationship with my family fell apart quickly.

At 36, I ended up in prison for a DUI charge. I still have problems with alcohol, but I am taking charge of my life in a new way.

I am currently enrolled in a Creative Writing Class in the prison. The purpose of this course is to alert teen-agers, still in school, about the dangers of alcohol and how badly it effects your whole life.

I will successfully complete my community service to prepare myself for a whole new world ahead of me. This time I really mean to have a whole new life, alcohol free. Happy.

Lisa's Story

For me, it all began when my parent divorced and I was between parents. My father was in the service and while he was away I was placed with my mother.

In time, my mother remarried. I and my step-father did not get along, so I ran away from home. When my father came back from duty, I moved in with him. He remarried, and things became difficult.

At 15, I became pregnant and quit school. At 16, I had my daughter. It was hard raising a child. Then I opted to get a G.E.D. to finish my high school education and I enrolled in Word Processing where I completed the course.

I landed a job where my hours were overwhelming, and combined with the hardship of raising a child alone, I turned to speed to keep up with all my responsibilities. My habit grew and I wasn't making enough at work to support my habit. I turned to crime to help support that habit and was arrested, convicted, and lost my job.

Now, as I am incarcerated, I realize that my life must change. My life has come to a complete turnaround. I now have plans to further my career and go back to school. One thing I know -- drugs have no place in anyone's life who wants to be productive and successful.

Tom's Story

My name is Tom and I'm here to tell you some of the prices I have payed for my drug addiction. I have to stick to some of the most damaging experiences or this story will go on for a long, long time.

All of these instances of incarceration add up to many years of lost freedom. I started smoking pot at age 13. I was kept back in 8th grade for 3 years and quit school on my 16th birthday. I let drugs rob me of an education. I joined the U.S. Army when I was 17 but, again, I found drugs or they found me, and I was dishonorably discharged for that reason.

I have been in Graterford State Prison, Dallas State Prison, and Greensburg State Prison. I have been locked up in New York City for possession of drugs. I've been imprisoned in New Jersey for shoplifting. I've been in Schuylkill County, Lehigh County, Northhampton County, Carbon County and Luzerne County Prisons - all these jails and always for drug law violations or shoplifting to support my drug habit.

I've been in Coatesville, V.A. hospital which is considered a Mental hospital and I went to Eagleville hospital for drug treatment, but I walked out.

I was put in a juvenile facility after I was discharged from the Army. I was still 17. I was drunk and on downers, and I assaulted a police officer - (For you to better understand me, I feel it important to tell you that is the only violent criminal charge on my record.)

I got married when I was 24 years old, my wife had two boys. Today, I'm divorced, and my one son lives with my ex-wife, and my other son lives with my mother. I let drugs split my family apart, and I've been watching my kids grow up in photographs from a prison cell.

Thats a hell of a price to pay!

The first time I ever came to Schuylkill County Prison I was 18 years old and the charge was selling pot. I am currently here serving 2-4 years for delivering of a controlled substance -- heroin. I have served a total of 8-10 years in either prison or treatment centers.

Today I'm 35 years old. I've had hepatitis. I can't begin to estimate the damage to my liver, or the total number of years it will take off my life down the line.

I paid mentally, physically, and financially. I lost jobs, trust, respect, and the list goes on.

Sometimes, I feel like I have two different people living inside my head. One that hates drugs and what it did to me. I have tears in my eyes when I think about it. And then there's the other person that doesn't even get the message that I'm trying to send to you. That's the insanity of addiction.

Insanity is making the same mistakes over and over, but expecting different results.

Sometimes I feel hopeless, helpless, like I'm my own worst enemy because I kept doing it to myself.

I have lost my own self-esteem, my self-worth suffers. I hear someone calling me a junkie, scumbag and I agree with them, but do nothing to correct it. Thats insanity. I hate what drugs did to me!!!

My life hasn't been easy, but I'm not looking for your **sympathy**. *I'm writing to tell you what drugs will do to you. This will happen to you if you mess with drugs. Hey! I was a tough kid growing up in my childhood. I was smart. I was strong. I was healthy. I didn't think it could happen to me. I thought I could quit doing drugs when I wanted to. WOW! Was I fooled!*

I know life can be tough out there, sometimes we have to struggle.

This course has been hard for me, the truth hurts. But I did the video and the writing for you and also for myself. I wanted to get honest with myself. I can't take anymore of that life style, and I'm taking a step in trying to change my life.

I always thought I had all the answers. I don't. I want to try another way of life because my way hasn't worked. I'm not telling you how to live your life or how to deal with different situations; but I'm telling you that drugs will mess your life up, and you don't want to live the life I have. But, if you do drugs, you will.

If you are still in school and not in jail, don't let it get this far. Save yourself.

My life is not over, so it's never too late.

There is one thing I left out in my writing and my video – When I was 18 years old one week after I got out of the juvenile facility, I got burnt in a fire (pouring gasoline on a camp fire). 27% of my body was burnt. That is when my addiction really got bad. I felt sorry for myself, I thought I was ugly, I thought I'd never have a girlfriend again. The burns were my big excuse for getting high. Today I'm in love with a real lady and she's in love with me. Today, I know that someone will love you for what you are inside. Develop yourself inside out, and drugs don't help in **any** *way.*

Stay strong out there, keep it together, try hard, and please don't mess with **DRUGS!!!**

Bill's Story

I, like many other kids, came from a broken family. My mother left home three or four months after I was born leaving my father to raise him and an older sister. My father held down two jobs to care for the children. Most of the time the kids were left alone or with a sitter, who, of course, had no real love for them.

When I started school at the age of six I had a hard time at first. As time went on I got use to it and actually started to like it. I got good grades up until 6th grade at which time I was introduced to beer and pot. I stayed in school, but my grades dropped, and in 10th grade I quit.

At the age of 17, I went to work at a window factory. I held that job for about 6 months but got fired because I was missing too much time. I was at this time doing too much partying to do anything else but sleep off the highs. This continued to go on for the next few years and at the age of 18 I was arrested for burglary, and imprisoned for 11 1/2 to 23 months.

After being released, I went back to work, but again I was fired for missing time. I had job after job and was in and out of prison eleven times over the next 6 years. The reason for this was because I was hooked on drugs and alcohol and had no direction in life.

During my last sentence in prison I received my G.E.D. A few months after my release, I met a wonderful girl. And two years later I had a son. Things were going good for about 3 years. Until I started using heroin. I started having fights with my girlfriend and fell back into my old ways.

After 5 years of life on the outside, I am back in jail. During this stay, I was involved in a creative writing course which is a community service aimed at helping kids who might be heading down the same road.

I am now back with my son and girlfriend and am holding a good job. I have stopped using drugs and am planning on getting married and raising my children properly.

Jamie's Story

My problem seemed to start at a very young age. I was attending public school in which I found friends, and, unfortunately, drugs. Everything seemed to be going ok when my parents noticed a down turn in my life. I started to miss school and doing badly in my work.

So my parents changed me to a different school. I was doing better for awhile. But when school was out, I would meet my old school mates and go doing drugs again. As the years went by I kept getting worse. So, after my 9th grade in parochial school, my parents had no choice but to put me back in public schools.

I was transferred back to public school. After I started 11th grade, I wanted to try and better my life so I quit school and joined the Army. At the age of seventeen, with the help of my parents, I got my G.E.D. and finished basic training. Everything seemed to be going well for me when I was off drugs. Then I got stationed over in Germany. As soon as I got off the plane I started to get settled down, but I got turned on to drugs again, but harder ones this time. So after a month over there, I got discharged.

When I came home my parents were disappointed in me, but that didn't matter to me. So I found work, but it didn't last. I would work a few months here, a few months there. When I thought I found the right job I worked there about seven years. I also met a beautiful girl. After we were going out for two years, we had a son. So as the time went by, we decided to get married.

However, the drug problem persisted. The problems started to get out of hand and we both went to get help. It worked for my wife, but not for me. We had another son. Things were getting better, but only for my wife. She could not handle me, so she asked me to leave. I left home and started using drugs more and more. Eventually I got myself into trouble with drugs and I got busted.

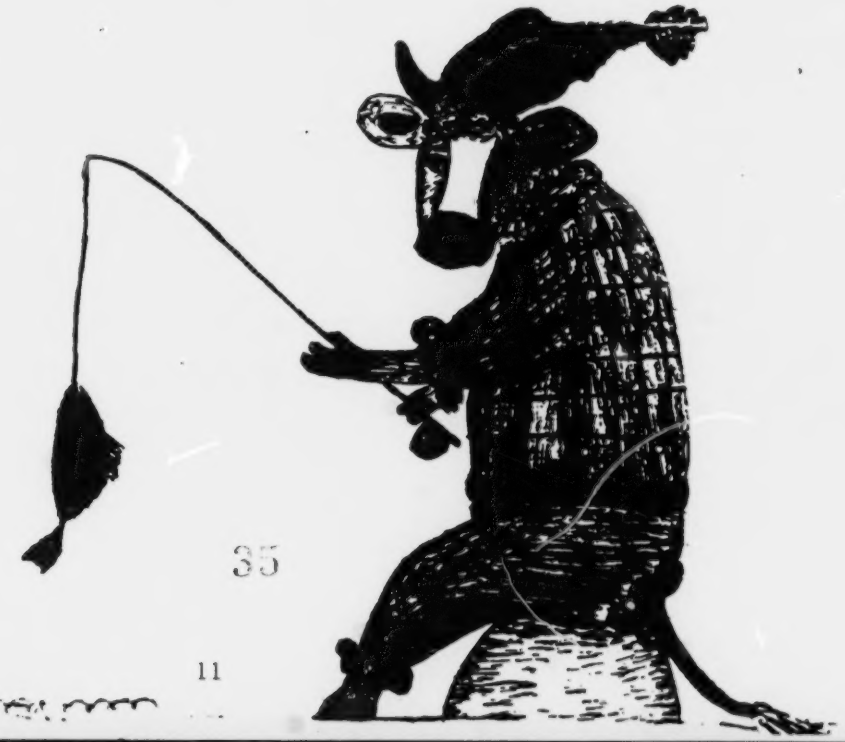
The months went by. My wife gave me custody of our oldest son. I worked all kinds of hours just to make ends meet. Everything was going good until I had to appear in court. There I was told I had to spend time in jail. I am in jail right now, getting some help for my drug problem. I hope that this time I am strong enough to make it wo[illegible]d go straight.

STAY ON THE BUS

NOT

LIKE

US.....



Dear Student thinking of leaving school,

How come when you are in school you feel like you want out. Then after you are out, you wish you would have never quit.

It's funny, but I don't know a single person who has quit school and is happy with what they have become.

Housewives, waiter-waitresses and laborers, when you think about it, any fool can do those jobs. Hey, there is a list of jobs for dropouts.

After I dropped out, I got a job at a Dairy Queen. That wasn't me, so I got out of there. Now that I think about it, I really didn't do much better: gas station attendant, factory worker, dish washer and lots of labor.

I know after awhile, I was screaming to get back in school, but it was too late. What a mistake I made. I know I didn't get along with my teachers, and I never even did my homework. I didn't even go to school most of the time. I wanted to run wild, party and have fun. School was no fun for me and I believed that I hated it, so I quit and found out the hard way that it is even tougher having to work. What made it worse was that my friends were in school and I had no one to run around with.

Then I met a few other dropouts hanging out in town. That's when my troubles with the law started. It's all been down hill since then.

If only I would have stayed in school.

School may seem boring or stupid to you at times, but think about it, don't a lot of other things that you do seem the same way? It's just a normal part of life, but because it seems boring, don't give up. Stay in school, it will pay off in the end.

Don't do anything you don't want to do just because your friends are doing it! That's what I use to do and now I'm in prison. All of my so called friends aren't around to help me out when I need the help the most.

I'm not a very good writer, but I hope to have gotten my point across to you clearly. I hope that I have at least made you think about **not** *dropping out of school. There is absolutely nothing to benefit from dropping out of school.*

Thank you for taking the time to read what I have written to you. Please stay in school!

Bob

by Robert Schweikert

Dear Student:

How's it goin'? Not bad myself today. I'm going to talk to you about quitting school, whether you want to or not, please read this letter in its entirety. It took me some time to do it, hoping to help you out, so please be considerate and read what I have written.

So you want to drop out of school do you? Do you have any particular reason for wanting to do this? Well, no mater what your reason is, there really is no excuse for dropping out of school.

I dropped out of school myself, and believe me, I regret it more everyday. I quit when I was only in eighth grade. My main reason for quitting was the fact that all of my friends were quitting, so I figured why shouldn't I quit too? Well, nowadays when I run into those "supposed" friends that I had, I ask them where they are working. Nine times out of ten they tell me that they don't have a job and can't seem to find one, for some odd reason.

Well, guess what" That odd reason isn't odd at all. The reason that they can't get a job is simply because they don't have a high school diploma. I have the same problem myself. When you fill out an application for a job most times the first part of that application that the employer looks at is whether or not you have a high school diploma. If he sees that you don't have a diploma and the guy next to you does, most definitely you aren't going to be the one who gets hired.

It is even difficult to get into the armed forces without a diploma. Nobody wants to train someone with insufficient knowledge of what the job requires.

Randy

Randy Williams

ALONE

KED 2-13-92

Alone In My Cell

Alone in my cell at the county jail. Just thinking to myself why did I fail? We sit here passing time while time itself passes us by. We sit and ask ourselves why and then finally you break down and cry.

After that all goes by, you become real hard inside and you find all the ways there are to hide all your feelings that are running around inside you.

We wait for the day to go away so another one comes and goes, and wait for the one that will take this all away.

by Michael Ramer

Mike

From Wrong to Right

The wrongs and rights I must learn in life. I am writing this essay from jail. I am here because of the wrong things in life I have chosen to do.

I am attending classes three times a week for two hours to try and better myself in life. If I can stop one person from doing the things I've done I will have accomplished something good out of these classes.

When I am released from prison, I hope I will still seek the help I need. It will be very different out there without doing the stuff I was doing. Hopefully, I will better myself at all that I'm doing.

I will be facing alot of problems I've had out there. One thing I must deal with is legal problems, all the little ones that built up over a long period of time.

It will be hard to face a lot of friends out there knowing that they are still doing drugs. The most difficult part of it all is to be able to say **NO** *and to mean it. I will end up losing some of my "friends" over all of this that is going on but it's better than losing your freedom. In the long run, I guess everything will work out.*

by Jamie Drob

Jamie

Time On My Hands

Jail is no joke! Once they close the large doors behind you there is no changing your mind. After you are here for awhile you don't even hear them slam anymore.

In jail, you are guilty no matter what you did. You lose all your rights as a human being. You become an object, a number, a name, just a face.

Feelings of loneliness and despair set in all too soon. There is no one to talk to, only your conscience. You are left alone in a dark world all to yourself. All those so-called "friends" you think you have out there in the real world seem to abandon you now in your time of need.

No one can help you now except yourself. You think you know it all, but you don't. As I sit in my cell, day after day, I ask myself: "how did I get here? why am I here in this strange place?" At first, I have no answers, only shame. I find myself blaming everything else for my mistakes.

Then one day after long bouts of depression, the anger inside me comes out. I stop feeling sorry for myself and wake up from this nightmare that I've twisted around my life.

I realize that I must take charge of my life to become a responsible person again. No one is going to do it for me. I must teach myself discipline.

With nothing but time on my hands, jail is a hard lesson to learn. Life is truly what you make it. Hard lessons are what life is all about.

Cathy

by Cathy Klipola

An Island Without Sand

When I'm alone in my cell it's like being on an island. On this island there is nothing or nobody. You are totally alone. All you can do is sit and think of what you did to get yourself in such a jam. Then you get mad at yourself for being so stupid.

You sit and try to think how you can change your life for the better. You feel angry and mad at yourself for getting into the mess that you're in.

It is a sickening sound to hear those doors close and lock and to know you can't open them. You are helpless to do anything. You have no friends, only acquaintances. You see in prison no one ever stays around long enough to become friends. When your family and friends do come, you have to talk to them through glass. You can't hug and hold them. That is how life is on the other side of the wall.

John

by John Audry Sadusky

Imprisoned

Being in jail is a very stressful situation in itself. All sorts of things go through your head. You feel trapped and helpless with no solution in sight.

Every window and door is locked all the time. All you hear from morning 'til night is the sound of doors slamming securely shut. These sounds echo into the night. It's very hard to sleep under these conditions, you feel anger and frustration. The night seems to go on forever.

In the light of the early morning hours, the feeling of confinement seems to ease up a little. As one door is opened for you to emerge from, you proceed only to find another door locked, and you realize the feeling of confinement has never left.

I feel it very stressful to look at my friends and family through a thick piece of glass while visiting with them. I want to reach out and touch them, hug them, or just hold their hands. Feelings of helplessness overwhelm me to the point of anger and rage at times.

All of life is stressful but learning how to cope with it is an entirely different matter.

Lisa

by Lisa Gaughan

Wrong Choices/Tough Reality

Just sitting in my cell thinking, looking at what I got myself into. Once again, concrete and steel, cut off from the world. It sucks badly.

I got a cellie (cellmate). He seems OK, but I don't get any privacy. I'm talking none at all.

I'm on the bottom bunk and he is on the top bunk. I guess it's better than being completely alone. If I write a letter, he is there, or even if I must use the toilet, he is there. I mean it's not always that way, but most of the time.

There is not much to do, play cards, write a letter, watch a little TV on the block or just lay in your cell and listen to your radio. That's if you are lucky enough to have one.

You get depressed alot. I guess it's because you have too much time to think. You go to bed at 10:00 p.m. and at 11:00 p.m. they shut your lights out. Then for the next two hours or so, you just lie on that hard bunk hoping and praying sleep finds you soon.

Then comes morning, you start all over again. The same thing, just another day.

To me, the worst part is all the noise. It's hardly ever quiet. The noise gets to your brain after awhile. Sometimes you just want to scream, "shut-up!" Even if I did scream, they would only laugh.

Randy

by Randy Williams

Free Thoughts From An Imprisoned Soul

Are you free? Have you seen the grass and trees and the shining seas? Lady, won't you come with me for a ride? We can discover the mountainside watching the water skipping through the stones. We rest our weary bones for awhile. Will you dance with me on the forest floor as the sunlight splatters around us laughing at the world and what it's done?

Can you see? Are you blinded by the light of eternity? Lady, won't you look beyond the sky? We can discover a brand new high laughing with seagulls, floating through the breeze with the greatest of ease for awhile. Celestial voices calling from distant stars to watch the moon behind them laughing at the world and what it's done.

J.R. and L.T.

A Dead Head Alone In A Prison Cell

I chose the right road but I went the wrong way. Now I'm stuck with a price to pay. So behind these bars I sit alone counting the days until I can go home.

I guess, if it weren't so long it wouldn't be so bad, but all that I've got are the memories of the things that I've done like a walk through the lot, the night of a show, or hugging someone I love.

I remember a life I've known so well, but now this is all I've got: this prison cell (like a terrible dream that never seems to fade, the life we have is the one we've made).

by Jamie

The Right Road Not Taken

I often wonder what it would have been like to be the person that I could have been before I abused alcohol and drugs.

Drugs and alcohol have changed my life so much. Believe me, none for the good. Sure, there were good times and alot of laughs, but the price that I paid and am still paying is definitely too much.

After somewhere around 10 years of my life in prisons, I'm finally getting tired, very tired. It's all so crazy.

The life I should have had, I never had, because I chose alcohol and drugs. I really do miss my life, but can only dream of what it may have been like.

I haven't touched drugs for 2 years now, but the fight still goes on inside of me. Maybe next time I get out of prison, maybe I'll get lucky. Maybe I'll get it right.

You know, that's all I want.

Randy Williams

From Me to You

This is an essay explaining why I believe that I can help others who are getting into trouble. In the next few paragraphs, I will discuss some of my past experiences and try to relate to you what kind of information I have learned from my experiences.

I must discuss experiences with drugs and alcohol. I have had alot of wild times with drugs and alcohol, I'll admit that, but having all of those wild times usually got me into some kind of trouble sooner or later.

I have been drinking alcohol since I was nine years old. But I didn't really show signs of alcohol abuse until I was about fifteen.

I had started stealing money from my mother to purchase six-packs or bottles of whiskey. Then when my mother would find out about my stealing the money, I would get punished. But that didn't stop me. I kept right on drinking. I couldn't get any money out of my mother, so then I would borrow from my friends or make new friends who would buy the booze or dope and would share with me. This continued on right up until the present.

I never really noticed how bad I really was until I had all of my friends telling me that I had better cut down or quit. But after I would cut back for awhile, I would resume my old ways and be right back out on a binge. I didn't care about anyone but myself. The only people that I talked to were the people who were right there getting drunk with me.

I would drink so much alcohol that I would black out every night, sometimes waking up in someone's house or their car, not even remembering meeting them. I once had to be carried off of a roadway by truck drivers when I passed out walking home and was lying in the middle of the road. I have often gone out with a whole week's wages and woke up the next afternoon and had no money to pay rent or to eat.

It didn't take long for my family to turn against me because I refused to change my ways. Then my friends turned me out also, and then I was homeless.

But even the fact of being homeless didn't seem to bother me. I used to hang around with another homeless guy and we would both get drunk together. I thought that he was the greatest person in the world, because he was in the same position as me, but he had money and he would buy the booze for us both.

Neither of us cared about anything but getting drunk. This went on for about two months until I was really drunk and hanging out in front of a restaurant, and unfortunately someone left their car running and I stole it and wrecked it while being chased by the police.

I didn't really realize how bad I was on the alcohol until I came to prison and had to dry out.

Now I realize what bad shape I was in and how far that I had let my habits take me into poverty. I had no job, no place to live; but, at the time, I didn't care. I just wanted to get drunk or high. The drugs and alcohol had made me so selfish and careless that I myself couldn't even see how bad I was into it.

I now realize what I put my family through, and I am filled with regret. But sorry just doesn't cut it. I have lost all trust from my family and friends. I am practically alone in this world, because of the effects that drugs and alcohol had on me.

But I have now started to realize just how much good that there is in this world without drugs and alcohol. I now know that I can change my way of life for the better.

I soon hope to be released from prison and when I finally do get released I want to go to art school. I am an artist and I have been wanting to go to school for quite a few years, but I never took the time away from partying to find out how to enroll.

But I am not going to waste my talent any longer by procrastinating. I want to do this and I will. It will take some time but I will do it. I want to make other people, who have looked down on me for so long, surprised when they see that I really can do something.

So if you are going down with drugs and alcohol, please stop now because it doesn't get you anywhere but down and out.

I was really bottomed out. Don't let yourself go as far as I did. I have met many druggies in prison and I see that not many people can come back to reality after being that far. The only reason that I was able to is because I was placed in prison and realized that if I didn't do something soon that I would probably be found dead somewhere from an alcohol overdose or killed in some type of drug-related accident.

So please, if you are noticing any symptoms of alcohol or drug abuse, please try to quit before you lose total control of yourself and your life or the trust of others around you. And if you don't think that you have a problem, you're only lying to yourself. Take this from someone who has been there and back; it isn't worth it.

Robert Schweikert

The Fight Within

The battle to overcome my drug addition has been a very hard fight within myself. It has taken a lot of time and is not over yet. My addiction to cocaine started the first time I stuck that needle in my arm. Not only cocaine, but any drug that found it's way into the needle. For many months I didn't believe that I was addicted. I thought I could just stop anytime I felt like stopping. Then one day my mom looked at my arm and said: "oh Baby, what are you doing to yourself? I love you, Randy." She was crying and that sort of messed me up a little. So I tried to stop, but it wasn't easy. Everyone I associated with was involved in some form of drug use. I didn't know any other kind of people. Also, at that time, I wasn't ready to stop. It got worse each day. I was putting about 2 ounces of cocaine in my arm every week. My need became greater and that came before anything else. Eventually, I was arrested for burglary, armed robbery and a few other charges. I believe that is what saved my life. They say the prices paid for using drugs are: Mental Hospitals, Prison or Death. I believe that. Unfortunately, I'm living proof.

Randy Williams

Self Experience

I believe my use of drugs and alcohol has caused me to go through alot of heartache, depression and I have a low opinion of myself. At one time, after the newness of using drugs and alcohol had worn off, I fell into a bad state of mind.

I was mad at myself for getting involved with them. I was also mad at myself because I was hooked and could not stop. I didn't know what to do. I tried counseling only to give up because it didn't seem to help. I tried turning to the Lord, but I just didn't get into that.

I got to a point where I gave up trying to quit drugs and got into them alot more. I started robbing and stealing and have done time in jail.

Because of these experiences, and having to deal with them, I have learned that it was all a waste of time. I now look at life with much more understanding. I know that if I would not have gotten involved, I would not be where I am today. These experiences have made me take a good look at myself and I want to make some changes.

I think of what I have been through, and my willingness to share it with others has given me the possibility of helping someone else who might be heading down the same road.

Bill Stephens

The "X" Factor

My experiences with drugs and prison may possibly help me to convey the proper attitude that should be taken in the fight to stay away from drugs and the "revolving door" of the criminal system.

I believe I can properly relate to people why they should steer clear of drugs, alcohol and prison because each has been a downfall for me. I have had "on-the-job training" so to speak. I luckily, have survived thus far. Others are not so lucky.

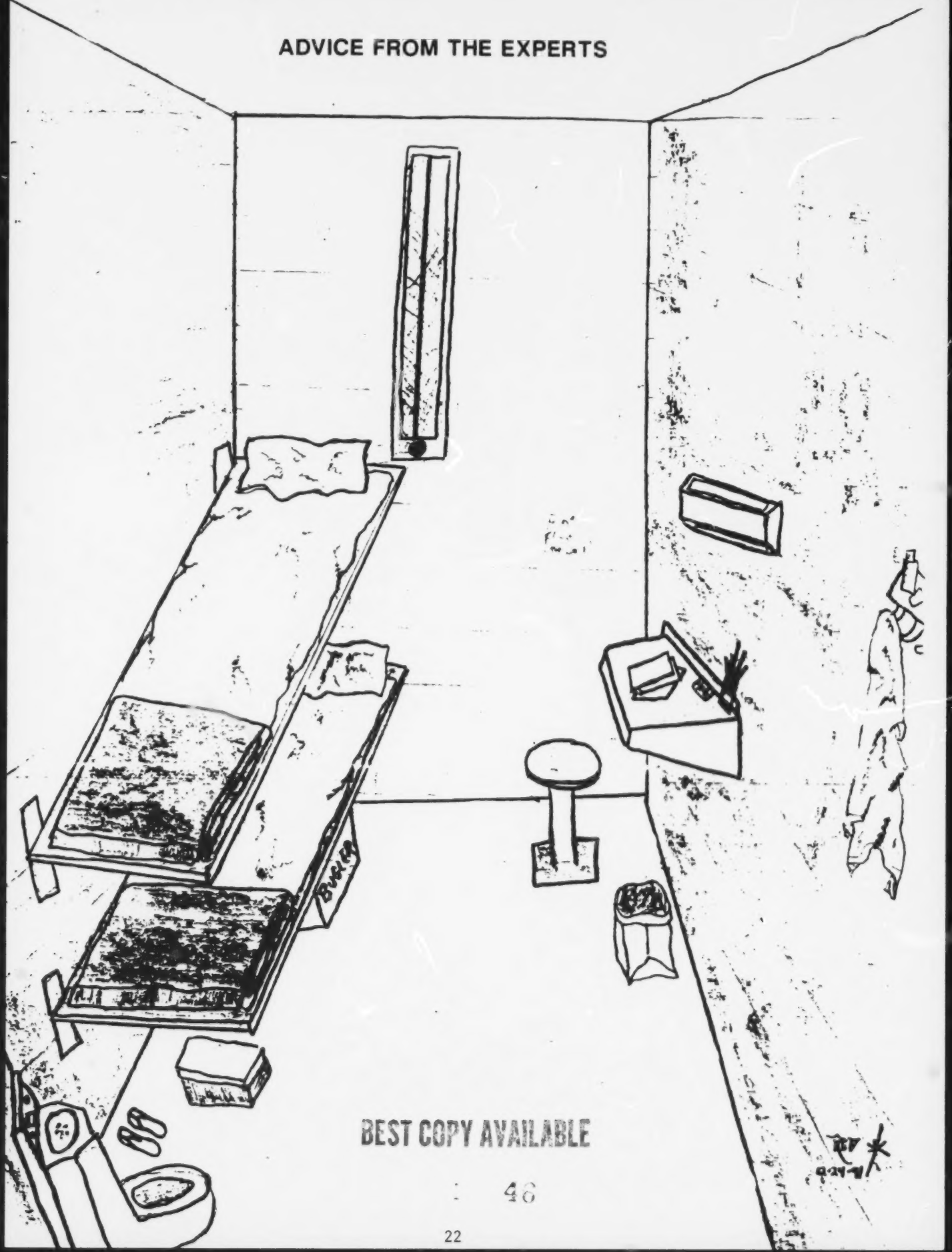
I do not have a master's degree in psychology or psychiatry. I am not a trained counselor or caseworker. I do not, by any means, claim to be any of these. I do not even have a college education, unfortunately.

I do admit, with much regret, that I have numerous hours of experience in the field of drugs and alcohol. A fact that I am not at all proud. Since I do have that "experience" I feel that I may have a chance, however slight, of helping others. Let us not forget that had I invested as much time into education as I had drugs and prison, I would undoubtedly be a professional at the top of my field. I can also guarantee you that I would have had more fun in the process, not to mention the fact that I would own most everything I ever wanted materially.

In conclusion, one does not necessarily need a college education to help others, although it certainly helps. There is also the "X" factor which involves living the experience. I believe that since I have obtained, unfortunately, the "X" factor, I may be instrumental in helping someone.

James S. Weitzel

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS



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Personal Feelings about Drugs

There is no way to avoid the world of drugs and or alcohol on the streets. Wherever you go there is some type of drug around. When I started using drugs and alcohol, I did it because of peer pressure and because I wanted to see what it was all about. At first I didn't even like the taste of beer, but after a while, it's effects had me drinking more and more for the buzz. I can't really say that I didn't dislike anything about drugs. I started off with pot. And will smoke it until my dying day. Then I slowly climbed up, I guess you could call it, "The Ladder." Going to methamphetamines, to cocaine, numerous pills. Sometimes not even knowing what I was taking, Just hoping to get off. And of course psychedelics.

I guess that peer pressure started this cycle, but after a short time, I wasn't pressured at all. I was willing to take anything, just for the experience. As time went on, I was constantly getting myself into trouble with the law, my family and friends. I moved out on my own at age 17, and just went downhill from there. I was constantly on a binge. But I didn't care, I didn't have to go home to anyone, I was enjoying my freedom. But when I lost several jobs due to my endless partying. I was starting to realize that I was "screwing-up." My friends had been telling me that I was "out of control" for a while, but I ignored them. I was myself and didn't care about anyone else. So I stopped using cocaine, as much as I was, and turned to alcohol, which felt like it was helping me. But I guess I went overboard with the booze too. Waking up in places that I didn't know, and I still don't know how I got there. Blacking out every night. I was a wreck. The day that I was arrested. And probably would've only gotten worse if it weren't for being locked-up. No I'm pretty much dried out, and it truthfully feels good. I used drugs and alcohol to try to make bad times in my life seem better. But they were really only making them worse.

This composition is very mixed-up, but I hope that the message makes some sense to someone who is on the verge of making the same mistakes.

Robert Schweikert

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Schuylkill County Prison
2nd & Sanderson Street
Pottsville, PA 17901

Dear Student,

I am writing you this letter in hopes that there is a possibility that I may enlighten your existing views on drug abuse.

My name is James Weitzel and I am 28 years of age. I am from Schuylkill County, Pottsville. I am also a drug abuser and to state it bluntly, a heroin addict.

I am presently incarcerated at the Schuylkill County Prison and I am charged with numerous offenses. Due to the repeated abuse of narcotics I have all but destroyed my life. I cannot tell you why I have abused Heroin because I do not have all the answers, nor do I claim to. You see, in many ways I was once very much like you. Thinking, "No, those things won't happen to me". Trust me when I tell you that all it takes is one time, whether it be out of personal curiosity or peer pressure, to find yourself the "writer" of one of these letters and not the "reader." I can only relate to you some of my personal experiences.

I have, due to a heroin addiction, sold every piece of property that I owned that was worth anything, from my leather jackets to my cars. Worse than that, I disappointed every single person who was close to me and hurt each one deeply. My family ties were severed beyond repair. I could not hold a job for more than one week at a time and was basically very unreliable and unfriendly.

What I am trying to express to you is the fact that living in a drug induced "fantasy" is in no way, shape or form positive toward your well being. You will be playing a game that you cannot win! I mean **absolutely and positively you will not win!** *You can only lose! Look around you, eventually someone you know is going to be killed by either a drug overdose or drunk driver of driving drunk!* **Just don't let it be you!** *You are the one in control of your life and the adult, mature way of handling drugs and alcohol is to just say no! You are going to make your own decisions and I hope you will make the correct ones. For you and your family's sake.*

Thank you for taking the time to listen to what I have to say,

Sincerely,
Jamie
James Weitzel

Schuylkill County Prison
2nd & Anderson Street
Pottsville, PA 17901

Dear Student,

I am writing in hopes to help you avoid getting involved with drugs or alcohol. I hope you will take the time to read this. There are alot more important things in life than partying. Partying may be fun, and I'm not saying not to do it; however, you can't let it interfere with your studies.

The use of drugs and alcohol can cause you to think improperly. It can also cause you to neglect your responsibilities. If you get carried away and they get a hold on you, you will lose control and they will start to control your life. If that happens you are heading for trouble. Your best bet is that if anyone offers you drugs or alcohol, just say no. Tell them that you're not into that kind of stuff and to leave you alone.

Try not to hang around with kids you know are doing drugs and alcohol. Concentrate on your studies and try to get good grades. Talk to your parents and ask them what they expect of you and try to do what they ask. Set some goals and work towards them. Get involved in sports or the scouts or whatever interests you.

By all means stay away from drugs and alcohol. Because they are the road to nowhere. If you care about the people that care about you, think about what I just said, and hopefully it will help you in some way.

Sincerely,

Bill

William J. Stephens

Schuylkill County Prison
2nd & Sanderson Street
Pottsville, PA 17901

Dear Student,

Hey! What's up? How is everything going? Sure hope this letter finds everything OK.

I'm sitting here with thoughts of you passing through my mind. Wondering how far you are going to take this direction in which you are leading.

I sit here thinking and wishing I were in your shoes. You know, just to have another chance.

I'm wondering how I may help you make the right decision. I really don't know, so I am asking for your help. Can you help me? You think about it. OK?

For now, I can only share with you some past experiences. These experiences are not just words. They are **ME,** *my life, my sufferings and the life it has created for me.*

I have been using drugs since I was 16 years old. Nothing really steady until I was introduced to Doctor Death itself - **Cocaine.**

I really thought about why I ruined my life and all I can come up with is that I wanted to fit in.

To date, it has only lead to pain and trouble. Oh! And lots of prison! Really a lot of fun and a whole lot to look forward too. **Not!**

So here I am, locked up once again. Fighting for just one more chance and wondering will it ever end?

Sincerely,

Randy

Randy Williams

Dear Students,

I am writing you this letter from a classroom, but this classroom isn't like yours. I'm sitting in a prison classroom. I'm here because I use drugs and I got into trouble for having drugs.

I started using drugs at a very young age like yourself. When I was young, my "friends" started me off by smoking pot. As the years went by, I started using different drugs. People say that if you start with the little drugs you will start taking harder drugs. Believe me, it happens.

So if you are taking drugs or want to try them, don't. You will end up here like me, and if you are doing drugs there is help out there. I never thought I needed help but I'm receiving it now in jail.

It's no fun and games being in here. You haven't any family when you're here. You get to see your family by looking out a glass window and talking on a phone. So if you need to talk to somebody, feel free to write to me.

Sincerely,

Jamie

Jamie Drob

50

Schuylkill County Prison
2nd & Sanderson Street
Pottsville, PA 17901

Dear Student,

I am an inmate at the Schuylkill County Prison. I'm also a mother of two teenage sons, one of them being a senior in high school.

At the present time, I'm serving a three month sentence for "Driving Under The Influence of Alcohol". You may not think three months is a long time, but is is here.

I feel I haven't been a very good influence for my children, but at the same time I don't want my kids to do what I did. I was drinking and driving, a deadly combination. I thought I could get away with something, but actually, what did I get away with?

I sit in my cell, day after day, thinking about all the things I wish I would have done, but didn't. I know now, how wrong I was to assume this could never happen to me. It can happen to anyone, even you!

Now my son drives me around because my driver's license was taken away from me. Drinking and driving do not mix. I tell my children all the time what a terrible mistake I've made.

If you or your parents have a problem with alcohol, please take the time to sit down and talk about what's bothering you. Don't turn to booze before you turn to your loved ones or a close friend. Tell someone before it's too late.

Sincerely yours,
Catherine
Catherine Klipola

Dear Classmate,

By being a victim of substance abuse I am now serving 18 to 36 months in Schuylkill County Prison for the crimes I have committed to support my habit.

I am writing this to help prevent someone else from making the same mistakes I have made, due to having a drug problem.

Before this all happened I had a bright future ahead of me. I didn't think I would get caught up in that vicious cycle and get hooked. I thought one, two times won't hurt, ha!, was I wrong. Learn from me and my mistakes.

It was hard, my parents were divorced when I was young, my father was in the Service, and I was between parents. I ran away thinking I was running from my problems. As I got older I was still looking for answers. I thought my problems would go away by turning to drugs.

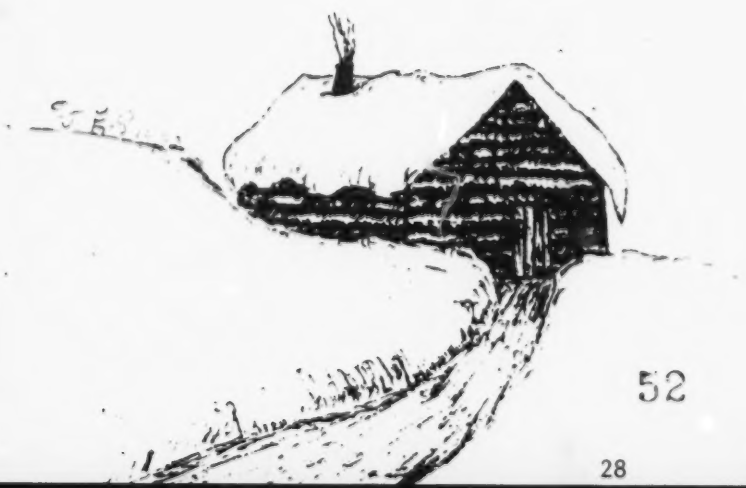
Now as I sit here in prison, I'm not running away from anything anymore. I have come to the crossroads in my life which I am forced to deal with.

Don't let this happen in your life what has happened to me. Learn to reach out and ask for help instead of running away from problems. There are people who care.

Sincerely yours,
Lisa
Lisa Gaughan

51

THOUGHTS FROM WITHIN



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Trapped Inside

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Freedom

If I were a bird
so I have heard,
I would soar to the sky
where clouds are high.

There would be no more pain
that beats us like rain,
only the bright light
which fills us with sight.

With lots on my mind
I've life all behind,
I know there is hope
which helps me to cope.

There is a quiet place
where I slow my pace,
I need not make a face
for I know I'll find grace.

by Cathy Klipola

For The Last Twenty Years I've Been Nothing But a Jerk....
Because My Feeble Attempts Didn't Seem To Work

I could have gone to college, maybe even Yale
but instead I did drugs and always went to jail.
If you think it has made me though as a nail,
then you wouldn't believe what I write in my mail.

I think of the day that I will be free,
on a nice sunny day, sitting under a tree,
with that special lady that I know is for me.

Right now I look in the mirror, and into my mug
I see all the damage from that one little drug.
The one that swept my life under a rug.
I know in my heart it's time for a change
before I'm totally deranged.

Tom Almonti

Emotions

(Anger) *I feel anger when I phone home and find out things I don't want to hear.*

(Fear) *When things are going wrong at home, and I am worried about losing my son.*

(Guilt) *I feel guilt when I think about what I've done to put myself in prison, and that my son is out there alone. (No mother or father)*

(Panic) *When "Children and Youth" come and talk to me about my son.*

(Helplessness) *When things are going wrong and I can't do anything about it.*

(Upset) *When I feel that way, I like to be alone and try and work things out in my head.*

(Shame) *I feel that way when my son is asked where I am at, and he tells them "in jail".*

(Embarrassment) *When I call members of my family and must ask them to help my son with homework.*

(Frustration) *When I can't do anything about what's going on. For instance, when I call home and they have the phone ringer turned off. I get ignorant with people for no reason.*

When I'm here and I feel this way I like to be left alone, and sit in my cell. Only in here, you are never really alone, the troubled souls of all the inmates make this a noisy and hellish place to be.

by Jamie Drob

There is a man in a cell,
who's actions brought him to hell.
Alone at night,
heart full of right,
praying to God he gets well.

by Randy Williams

.....

"The Book"

As I sat in this cell
then walked all around,
looking for something
it was then that I found
A book on a table
all tattered and torn,
It showed heavy use
it must have been used
even the cover was worn.

I picked up the book
and began to read,
I was in shock,
it was too good to believe.

As I turned each page
most carefully,
I came to find the truth
that Jesus died for me!

To tell you the truth,
that's what it's about,
praise and thanks to the Lord,
I read it and shout!

This book is the Bible
as you read it you'll see,
it's full of truth
for you and for me!

by T. Croghan

.....

The only thing that can stop you is you yourself.

.....

A teardrop is a drop of water unless it comes from your own eyes.

by Randy Williams

Opening Up

I am very much an ordinary man.
I prove it once in a while, every way I can.
Some people notice and accept
certain secrets, which I have kept.

In ways, I am shy.
that's just how it is, I don't know why.
It feels strange to open yourself up
and explain to others, when times are so tough.

You feel as though they wouldn't care.
That they'd laugh at you, or give you a stare.

As I've found, there are people, who can help you out.
Some who've been along that same route.

Of course, there are others, who could care less
if you walked around wearing a dress.
But don't bother with them, think of yourself.
Think of your problems, you've put on a shelf.

Hiding from your troubles, is a bad habit.
You must talk to someone, and let them grab it.
Work these things out, and try to get over,
whatever it is that's holding you under.

I was once the very same way.
Holding it in, from day to day.
It builds itself up, and make you feel;
as though your heart, is being pierced with steel.

It took a while, but I let up.
I spilled the contents held within my cup.
Someone was listening, and they cared
their knowledge and love, they did share.
I worked it out, with help from that one.
It was just like emptying a loaded gun.

Bottled up feelings, can be quite explosive
so let them come out, and continue to live.

So talk things out, to someone who cares.
And never mind others ignorant stares.

You have no friends here, you have no help,
so you think some more and occupy yourself.

You are surrounded by concrete and steel,
blink, look around, it's very real.

Reality is looking you right in the face,
how can anyone live in this place?

You hope to God that you can survive,
and don't go crazy and take a dive.

This world grows on you and won't let go,
sooner or later it starts to show.

Leaving is a wish, and it's also a dream.
Will that day come? It doesn't seem.

by Robert Schweikert

.....

Just Another Day

Imagine being a bird in a cage,
you come and go as your owners please.
Sometimes you sweat, other times you freeze.

You have no privacy, your freedom is taken,
slowly, but painfully, you build up hatred.

You do as your told, or else it gets worse,
Somehow it seems you're under some curse.

At times you could just lose control,
let things out from within your soul.

Other times you sit and think on and on,
wishing your life would just be gone.

You think you're going mad, you're going crazy,
Everything around you turns dull and hazy.

You think of home, and wish you were there
instead of this confusion, tugging at your hair.

You don't have friends who are real,
no one cares just how you feel.

Days are monotonous, nothing changes,
your mind displays it's many ranges.

At times it seems somewhat fair,
whatever happened to people who care?

By Tom Almonti

Frank was a man who thought

happiness came in bags that you bought.

He was having a bash

until he needed more cash

now he's in prison to rot!!!

.....

T. *oday be yourself*

E. *rase all worries*

R. *elax and reflect*

R. *emember the good times*

I. *nvite good thoughts*

E. *njoy life*

C. *all the shots*

H. *ave confidence*

R. *ise to the top*

I. *nvolve yourself*

S. *trive to be the best*

by Bill Stephens

Trapped Inside

I dream of freedom from my yesterdays,
How it hurts to think of things those ways.
Trapped deep inside of these waterlooms,
Just like the cold dark earth of dusty tombs.

I feel, I breath, but it is to no end.
Can't escape the pain, I twist and bind.
Life just seems to go on like forever in a day,
I dream of passions of love to give away.

But all turns void, when it stares back at me,
Everything I seem to try, brings me pain and misery.
It hurts so much, everytime I begin to try,
I fight back the tears, but in the end I cry.

There's tears of passion, tears of pain.
There's tears of love, I wish to gain,
But there's only one answer I wish I'd find.
Will there ever be a time when love is blind?

.....

There was a drug addict named Bill
who liked to eat some funny pills.
He ate so many 'til he couldn't wake up.
He found out that they could kill.

.....

There once was a kid named Jack
who liked to smoke a little crack.
While robbing a store
he slipped on the floor,
and ended up breaking his back.

For each who tries Dope
it's like slipping on soap,
but when you can't cope
and there is no hope,
it's like your life is at the end of a rope.

by James Drob

I Can Dream, Can't I?

If tomorrow would come,
would my dream then come true?
A dream so beautiful
A dream of happiness
and a life I can share.
A dream of love
with you, always there.
A dream of freedom,
another chance at life.
A dream of together,
with you as my wife.
So much for my dream
a dream is just a dream.
For tomorrow never comes
or so it may seem, in here.

by Randy Williams

.....

Gerry's Favorite Poems

I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the "Land of Beginning again!"
Where all our mistakes, and all our heartaches,
And all poor selfish griefs,
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door
And never be put on again.

(Unknown)

.....

What about the accusers' roar
of ills that I have done?
I know them well, and a thousand more.
But you need not experience them
For your choice can be different.

(Unknown)

My Mother

I want to tell you a story
of a mother in tears,
Who had nothing to offer
but love all through the years
She's a mother of six
with a will to survive.
Through her gracious love
She kept them alive
There was no one to help her
She was all on her own
But in the eyes of her children
She was a queen on a throne
What makes her different
from all other mothers?
I love her most dearly
because she is **MY** *mother.*

by Randy Williams

.....

Rest In Peace

I had a few problems
Went to a friend named Jack,.
He said here take a puff or two
It will make it go away.
IT DID FOR A FEW HOURS
I had a few problems
Went to a friend named Sarah.
She said here take a few brews
It will make you forget them.
IT DID FOR A FEW HOURS.
Then they came back
So I did it again and again
Till at last it caught up to me
Now you see, **I Rest in Peace.**

There was a woman named Karen
Who went on an errand.
She stopped to pick up some blow
Then got caught with the snow.
By a cop
Who was her pop
Now she's got to do
10 to 12 for dues.

by Gerald Shive

62

To go out on a drunk and find another drunk
and think she is beautiful.
Then wake up in the morning and want
to kill yourself for what you have done.

Randy

.....

Loving life and can't wait to be free
Loving life to the fullest
wanting to have fun again, and be
with my family.
Waiting to be released to the world
It feels like the day will never come.

John Sadusky

.....

Drunk and Disorderly, what a joke
Like a wheel missing a spoke.
Like a car that's out of gas
Boy, was I a stupid ass.

There are no secrets to success,
It is the result of preparation,
hard work,
and,
Learning from Failure.

Red

Thoughts From The Cellblock

As the days grow cold
My life is on hold.
Oh what a shame I find it to be
Not to be free.

Sometimes I feel so low
I wish I could grow
And reach the sky
So I can feel high, but not on drugs.

Out in the dark
into the night
All of my fear
swallowed in sight
It takes all my will
to reach out and feel
But sometimes it seems
that nothing is real.

Lisa Gaughan

.....

How can you tell people who are out there to be

AWARE?

How can you tell people? Life isn't **Fair!**

How can you tell people that you have lots of

Time?

How can you tell people that you have **so much time**
to **care?**

How can you tell people that you do
care?

I want to say:

Be aware
Life's not fair
but I **care**

I've got the time - so please
listen .....

Alberto Espinosa

64

Yes, I'm hooked on drugs, I confess.
It has me in a state of distress.
For my efforts, I have nothing to show.
Where I am going, I do not know.
My life is completely a mess!!!!

Bill Stephens
"A person dependent on drugs is like
an apple tree that bears no fruit."

.....

Some Observations

There is a drug called cocaine
which will really fry your brain
When you run out
You'll flip right out
and do anything to get that cocaine.

.....

There once was a man who did meth
who was headed in a direction called death.

He fired that dope
and never said nope
and now he's on his last breath.

.....

There once was a guy named Ray
who smoked reefer everyday.
He fired up a joint
but there was no point.
Now he don't know what to say.

.....

There once was a girl named Jill
who ate every kind of pill.
She fell over dead
never hitting her head.
And now she lays on the hill.

Randy Williams

Thinking Back

First you start out small
no one knowing it's you at all.
Then you go for bigger and better things,
because of the rush and money it brings.

You'll think you're invincible, you'll never get caught.
It's the greatest feeling in the world, and then it's not.
Sooner or later, it comes to a halt.
And before you know it, you're like money in a vault.

No way out, except by law.
You think so much, your mind feels raw.
You want to leave, you've got to get out.
So you scream and you shout.
But no one around feels your pain.
No one feels what's going on inside your brain.

Reality slaps you square in the face.
Then your paths, you will trace.
And see it's your fault, that you're in this place.
And think to yourself, "you're nothing but a waste".

After a while, things get a little better.
You've gotten along with quite a few
but, still, others strangely look at you.

It's hard to control your emotions, but you must.
If you want to receive the judge's trust.

You hold it all in, and it eats at you.
But don't let it loose, it's the wrong thing to do.

Wish and hope for that,
When Out will be, your walking way.

Then your day comes and they call your name.
"Pack it up, you're going home" this isn't a game.

You're out the door and looking up at the sky.
You think to yourself, "Change?" "Why?"

Then you get home and you want to let loose.
You have your girl and a bottle of juice.
How good it feels to be at home
Instead of being locked-up and all alone.

But just remember, back to that day.
When your freedom was taken away.

Keep it clean, I know you can.
Inside of you is a good man.

If you don't and resume your old ways
You'll be back in here again some day.

Robert Schweikert

I liked to smoke pot and take pills.
I did it until I got very ill.
I stayed up all night, and slept all day
and always woke up with the chills.

.....

I used to drink and drive,
till the cops caught me doin' 95.
I smashed into a pole, ended up in a hole.
and I'm lucky to still be alive.

Robert Schweikert

.....

All Is Not Lost

Up on a hill
Nailed to a cross
There is my Savior
To say **"All Is Not Lost."**

I didn't come here,
for fortune for fame.
I came here to hang,
to give you all gain.

So, don't you shed tears,
when you look up at me.
Just get on your knees
and thank the Father for me!

I've been beaten, and crowned,
I've suffered this pain
cause **"All Is Not Lost,"**
you've got lots to gain.

You are not condemned,
for I've broken those chains.
I'm the bridge to the Father,
now don't you act strange.

Come to me now!
I'll forgive all your sins.
As your old life is gone,
Your new one begins.

Jump for the joy
that your new life receives.
Be glad in this day,
thank the Father for me.

Just look towards the hill
But not with remorse.
As I've told you before
"All Is Not Lost!"

Tom Croghan

Tears

Down the dark and lonely
hallway I walked,

Needing my time, my space.

Never seeming to find it.

I look towards the window
as I always do.

Hoping that all of my questions
will be answered.

And all of my problems
will be solved, my dreams come true.

Lisa Gaughan

.....

There comes a time in every man's life
When he wakes up one morning
to find he's been asleep far too long.

.....

Friends are like flowers,
they are few and far between.

Catherine Klipola

.....

There once was a man named Randy.
Who thought drugs were fine and dandy.
That shot of cocaine,
Really fried his brain.
So now he's happy with candy.

Randy Williams

.....

Yes, I'm hooked on drugs I confess.
It has me in a state of distress.
For my efforts I have nothing to show.
Were I am going. I do not know.
My life is completely a mess!!

Bill Stephens

.....

When I die,
Bury me deep.
Lay two speakers by my feet.
With earphones on my head.
*and **always** play the Grateful Dead.*

James Drob

Ride that fast lane
the road to nowhere

Always looking back
and never getting there.

No one seems to care
where you are going to.

Don't even care
what you are doing to you.

You got to stop
you got to scream
you got to believe
in your own dream.

Randy Williams

.....

Acrostic

C *hange your ways.*

A *lways be kind.*

T *ake charge of your life.*

H *elp one another.*

Y *ou can make a difference.*

F *ace the facts.*

R *eality is all around us.*

A *nger will get you nowhere.*

N *ever condemn they neighbor.*

K *eep your chin up, things can't be that bad.*

Cathy Klipola

A Message From The Instructor

I was really sorry to see this class come to an end. It's been a first for all of us and we all walked away the better for the experience.

This book is filled with genuine, sincere offerings from the hearts of each man or woman who participated in this project. I was impressed by their concern for the children that they knew this book would be reaching. Some of the classmates had children themselves and you could feel their love and empathy coming to surface.

As for me, I have been enriched by the experience. I feel I have met some authentic individuals with lots to give. We all have handicaps and these individuals are no different. **"Except For The Grace Of God Go I."**

It is my sincere hope that all the participants will find within themselves the courage to press onwards toward the positive goals that they have articulated. They will be in my prayers as I, too, want to see them reach their God-given potential.

Miss Kathy Vaughn

Miss Kathy Vaughn

EXCERPTS FROM FINAL COMPOSITIONS

"Our society has alot to do with the problems of alcohol abuse today. If you look at billboards that are on the trains, buses, and our roadways, they are using the subliminal power of suggestion that in order to either have a sexy woman or man, you need the proper type of wine, beer, or liquor." **TOM CROGAN**

"Without a diploma, you have a hard time getting a good-paying job. Without a job where you make enough money to pay the bills, you will be tempted to steal, deal drugs, or something else illegal. These things will lead you to prison. That place that I now call home." **GERALD E. SHIVE, JR.**

"Alcohol is among the number one disease in the world. It alone causes an alarming number of deaths every year. I myself am lucky to be alive to talk about my experiences." **CATHERINE KLIPOLA**

"With the evidence so easily at my disposal, I wonder, why can't I free myself from it's deadly grasp? I do not have the answers?" **JAMES WEITZEL**

"Now I'm here behind prison walls, and for what? All because of **"Alcohol"**. *It has ruined my life and robbed me of my freedom. Sometimes I thank God that someone finally stopped me before it was too late."* **CATHERINE KLIPOLA**

"DO NOT, EVEN ONCE *attempt to satisfy your curiosity, for that is all it takes.* **ONCE, NOT TWICE.** *That is my purpose, to inform you of the lethalness of alcohol or other narcotics and possibly the phrase "strike you're out" will apply to* **YOU!** *Not 3 strikes but 1!!!* **JAMES WEITZEL**

"My own life has been all but destroyed and yet drugs are so powerful that I cannot honestly say that I will never use them again. After all they have done to me, my family, my girl! That is one of the most dangerous aspects. That after this holocaust, and that is what I consider it, I cannot say that I am, or ever will truly be, free from the demon **HEROIN."** **JAMES WEITZEL**

"Heroin is a very dangerous drug that will lure you into its grasp with false promises of tranquility, peace, and the sense that everything will be all right. It will then begin to bare it's true colors once you are addicted and you will become just an extension of the drug and it's need to destroy. You will begin to hurt those around you. Those you wouldn't normally hurt. The ones who care, you will push them away fiercely, all the while destroying years and years of relationships, friendships, etc. You will slowly but surely begin to destroy your own life. The destruction will spread like cancer around and within your life." **JAMES WEITZEL**

"Early sex cost my girlfriend and me alot: our education, our love, any future time we may have had together. But today, it can cost you alot more than a good life. Today, it can literally cost you your life itself -- today, there is **AIDS."** **JOHN WILLMAN**

"My habit was killing me financially, and it was ruining my health too. I turned to shoplifting to help support my habit. Anyone who thinks they won't get caught are only fooling themselves. Of course, I was one of those people. It all catches up to you eventually. And, I know, because I am now serving time.

LISA GAUGHAN

"The next time someone says you should get high, get real with them. Tell them to go fly a kite, or that you're high on life and you don't need drugs to be high. Sometimes I wish that someone would have been there to help me or to stop me from trashing my life the way I did." **ALBERTO ESPENOSA**

"I started doing drugs at the age of 13 years old. Since then, my life went down hill. I was doing everything from smoking marijuana to shooting heroin. When I started injecting heroin, that's when all my main problems began. My one daughter got hurt badly because I was on drugs and not paying good attention"

SANDRA FOSTER

"When I was a kid my father was and still is a drunk. He would come home and beat my mother up and my sisters. I feel that my father has ruined everyone's life around him. That is just one example of how alcohol affected my life." **MICHAEL RAMER**

"Now I am, now I was, now I ain't. It's all gone, there's nothing."

RANDY WILLIAMS

"When someone tells you that Pot leads to other drugs, listen to them, they know what they are talking about. I couldn't think straight because I was already hooked." **BILL STEPHENS**

"Drugs led me to a lifestyle that I thought was great. Boy was I wrong! I thought the life of a drug dealer would be smooth going, wrong! There were days, weeks, that I went without sleep because of the fear of being shot or robbed." **PATRICK HOPKINS**

"My pain is still with me even after 2 years of no drugs. My determination grows stronger to stay away from drugs. Drugs are no joke. They are a serious delusion that people misunderstand as a means of escape."

RANDY WILLIAMS

"Do you think that my childhood dreams were of spending time behind bars? No way, man. As I said, a dead end. Without a doubt, **A DEAD END."** **BILL STEPHENS**

"Before I started drinking, I had trophies in football, baseball, and track. Then everything went down hill. I lost interest in everything. Drinking was a peer pressure sort of thing. All my friends did it. So I did it too and now look where I'm at. It cost me sixteen months of my life, and being away from my family and loved ones. It really wasn't worth it at all." **GERALD SHRIVE, JR.**

"I thought they were good times. Really I was everybody's fool. The person they came to see when they wanted a good time. I wish I would have stayed in school. It could have helped me better myself in the long run. School is something that is important in your life. I just wish I would have realized it then instead of now."

GERALD SHRIVE, JR.

SCHUYLKILL INTERMEDIATE UNIT #29 - 1991-92

A Writing/Communications Curriculum for Incarcerated Adults

353 Project
Contract #98-2021

Submitted by: *Lyn Leto*
Coordinator of Special Services

SCHUYLKILL INTERMEDIATE UNIT #29 - 1991-92

353 Project
Contract #98-2021

A Writing/Communications Curriculum for Incarcerated Adults

A Rationale

Introduction

Surveys of inmates in county prisons have indicated that a large percentage (60% and higher) have dropped out of school before graduation and/or had problems with drug and/or alcohol abuse. These conditions directly or indirectly impacted on their eventual incarceration.

Counselors dealing with inmates report that most incarcerated adults show evidence of low self-esteem and alienation from their communities. In addition, case histories show little ability to form short or long-term goals. They also have had little opportunity to see worthwhile projects through from beginning to end.

The main goal of this curriculum is the development of improved writing skills motivated by the performance of a community service - a self-actualizing task normally denied prisoners by virtue of their incarceration. Oral communications skills, specifically in helping situations, will be interpolated throughout the course with the development of effective writing skills. Compassionate communications, both oral and written, will be shown to be a vehicle to a fulfilling, productive life upon parole - whether in an organized community service or one-on-one relations encountered daily in everyday life.

This curriculum aims to form a bonding between inmates and at least one part of society -at-risk youth. It will also aid incarcerated adults familiarize themselves with various community resources, hopefully helping each find one in which he or she would like to serve, once paroled. At the very least, students of this curriculum will be able to refer people in various difficult life situations to the appropriate agencies.

The opportunity for setting a goal and seeing it through to fruition is also here. It is present in the development of writing and communication skills which will be evidenced in the finished product - the students' personal choices of their own writings concerning drug/alcohol abuse, and school incompletion - a book for area at-risk students in all county school districts.

Every group will naturally develop a uniqueness all its own. The instructor is urged to use the emerging personality of the class, along with individual students' needs and interests to restructure class times and activities in order to best meet the course goals.

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CLASS #1

Objectives

- *To measure pre-course writing skills of students*
- *To measure pre-course knowledge of students regarding community service*
- *To measure pre-course self-esteem of students*
- *To provide overview of course objectives*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*
  Community Service Survey
  Self-Evaluation Survey

Time

3 hours (1 class period)

Directions

1. *Each student will compose and edit a 200 word composition on their feelings and attitudes about drugs, alcohol use, and/or dropping out of school.*
2. *Each student will complete a Community Service Survey which will measure their knowledge of this concept as well as their awareness of community organizations which are available for referrals.*
3. *Each saudent will complete a self-awareness survey which measures self-esteem.*
4. *Instructor will present course overview.*

- *To improve oral communication skills*
- *To improve written communication skills (Grammar hints will be put on board each class for discussion)*
- *To increase awareness of the concept of community service*
- *To give students an opportunity to participate in a community service project.*
- *To produce a book composed of students' original writings revolving around the negative consequences of substance abuse and/or dropping out of school. This booklet will be the students' contribution to all Schuylkill County districts to be used with at-risk Students.*

CLASSES #2 & #3

Objectives

- *Students will set guidelines to be used during class discussions*
- *Students will learn the concept of community service*
- *Students will familiarize themselves with area service agencies*
- *Students will learn effective listening skills*
- *Students will practice good listening skills*
- *Students will learn to put into writing what they understood a person to say.*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*
- *Listening Skills worksheets, LS1 - LS5*

Time

6 hours (2 class periods)

- *Students will, with instructor's guidance, compose a list of class rules to be used during discussion periods, e.g. no put downs, only one person talks at a time, etc. These rules will be written on the board and students will write them on the cover of their folders for future reference.*

Directions

1. *Student will read and discuss sheets LS1, LS2, and LS3, and analyze the merits of the listening skills to be learned.*
2. *Students will role play in pairs utilizing the listening skills described. Suggested "problems" for role playing are listed below, but students creating their own role-play situations is also encouraged:*

    - *"I feel awful because I can't seem to find a good job."*
    - *"I'm afraid that even though I want to go straight, my friends will cause me to get into trouble again."*
    - *"My problems are too much for me. I'm afraid I'm going to start drinking or taking drugs again."*

- *I'm sorry that I never graduated from high school. I know the problems that this causes. Now my son/daughter is planning on quitting school.*

3. *Student observers will critique the "listener" in constructive fashion using the good listening skills sheets as guidelines.*

4. *After role-playing activity, all students will pick one of the role-playing scenarios and write the situation as he/she heard and understood, emphasizing the* **feelings** *and* **content** *transmitted.*

5. *Students will be solicited to read their written interpretations of what they understood the speaker to say.*

6. *Students will read and discuss handout sheets, LS4 and LS5.*

7. *Students will familiarize themselves with community service organizations through discussion of a worksheet which will list local community organizations along with their goals, activities, use of volunteers, and phone numbers. Guest speakers representing various community organizations will present brief presentations regarding their organization goals and activities, followed by an open forum between social agency representatives and the class.*

CLASS #4

Objectives

- *Students will practice letter writing skills*
- *Students will demonstrate that they possess valuable "living" knowledge that can be used as "community service"*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*

Time

- *1 Class period*

Directions

1. *Each student will study the format of letter writing, through writing a group missive put into proper format by the instructor, on the board.*
2. *Each student will write, revise, and edit a letter to an imagined high-risk student about reasons why that student should not abuse drugs/alcohol or leave school before graduation.*
3. *Each student will exchange their letters for evaluation by another student using the criteria for proper letter-writing format.*
4. *The class will form five groups of three. They will exchange and evaluate their letters on the basis of content, syntax and clarity of purpose.*
5. *Each student will then rewrite the letter using student critiques and submit the finished product to instructor for evaluation.*

CLASS #5

Objectives

- *Students will reinforce letter-writing skills learned*
- *Students will be given the opportunity to experience the gratification of having helped another person*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*

Time

- *1 Class period*

Directions

1. *The instructor will return the students' letters of the previous class and direct appropriate discussion.*
2. *The instructor will "draw out" students' recollections of letter-writing rules.*
3. *Each student will be told to imagine that his/her letter of the previous class trying to persuade an imaginary student to avoid the pitfalls of drug/ alcohol abuse or school incompletion was successful.*
4. *Each student will now write a letter to the same imaginary person revealing his/her own feelings about the letter recipient's decision.*
5. *Students will follow the same format as the previous class for student evaluations and re-writing of final product for teacher feedback.*
6. *Depending on skill levels developed, letter writing as homework on the following subjects is suggested out-of-class work:*
   - *Your best friend has lost a loved one through death*
   - *Your son/daughter who is living far from you is in trouble with the law*
   - *One of your favorite relatives or friends just tried to commit suicide*
   - *Your high school friend is in a marriage where she is being physically and emotionally abused*

CLASS #6

Objectives

- *Students will learn the content style of tribute-writing*
- *Students will learn the difference between fact and opinion*
- *Students will write a tribute using fact and opinion*
- *Students will develop a short and long-term positive goal through exploration of their experiences and dreams*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*
- *Sample Tributes, TR1 - TR3*
- *List of community organizations - goals, use of volunteers, phone numbers*

Time

- *1 Class period*

Directions

1. *The instructor will read and distribute copies of the three tributes (TR1, TR2, TR3)*
2. *The instructor will lead a discussion on the elements and style inherent in tribute writing*

STYLISTIC ELEMENTS COMMON IN TRIBUTE WRITING

I. <u>Includes background information</u>

- *Homelife, role of family in his/her development*
- *Educational background*
- *Work situations*
- *Frustrations & contributing factors*
- *Handicaps, or addictions of person*

II. <u>Includes chronological progress</u>

- *Lowest point*
- *Point of awareness*
- *Decision to turn life around*
- *Looking for help*

3. *Each student will compose, edit and rewrite a tribute to himself/herself using real facts and opinions*

4. *Five groups of three will share their tributes, critiquing and commenting on style and content*

5. *Each student will write part two of the tribute part to himself/herself. Part two will consist of* **imaginary** *facts and opinions to which the student aspires in the future*

6. *Volunteers from the class will share Part 1 and/or Part 2 with the class*

7. *The instructor will collect tributes at the end of class for evaluation*

CLASSES #7, #8, #9, #10

Objectives

- *Students will learn to write a thesis statement (a sentence that summarizes the main idea of an essay)*
- *Students will learn to write an essay. (A group of related paragraphs about one topic)*
- *Students will learn how to support their thesis statement in the body of an essay*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*

Time

4 class periods

Direction

1. *Explain what an essay is: writing that expresses a main idea and supports this main idea (or thesis) with examples and details.*

2. *Discuss with the class topics for their essays that would fulfill their purpose of persuading students to avoid drug/alcohol use or to stay in school. These topics should be able to be based on personal perspective and be supported by their own negative experiences as examples.*

   Students may work in groups according to topic interests, brainstorm together and decide on individual topics that will bring different points of view, experiences and details that will be useful in persuading today's youth to avoid the problems which they encountered. For example, a suggested subject might be "Why my life experiences qualify me to be a helper to at-risk students."

3. *As the students generate more information on their topics, have them decide how to best meet the needs of their targeted audience - Schuylkill County at-risk youth. Have students decide what is their purpose - to explain, define, describe, compare, predict, analyze or persuade? In other words, what is the point that they are trying to make?*

4. *Discuss how purpose will affect their thesis statement.*

5. *Have each student read aloud his/her statement and purpose (explain, describe, etc.)*

6. *Have students produce rough draft and then work in groups for feedback regarding revising in order to make thoughts and purposes clear.*

7. *Spotlight grammar instruction as needed, using essay construction as motivation.*

8. *Have students write final draft and share with class.*

CLASS #11

Oojectives

- *Students will learn the meaning of aphorisms in a concise statement of a principle or rule of conduct. Synonyms: maxim or adage. An old saying that most people regard as true.*
- *Students will earn to read and understand the meaning of aphorism related to the course goal of helping at-risk youth.*
- *Students will learn to paraphrase selected aphorisms and relate them to their own lives.*
- *Students will practice writing their own aphorisms*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*
- *Selected Aphorisms, SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4, SA5*

Time *1 class period*

Directions 1. *Distribute sheets with selected aphorisms. Discuss various interpretations with the class*

2. *From one sheet of aphorisms have each student select one and write in their own words what the adage means. Also, have the class write how the selected proverb relates to him/her and how it could benefit today's youth.*

CLASS #12 & #13

Objective . *To introduce the concept of poetic, as opposed to narrative writing*

Materials . *Papers, pens, pencils*

Time *1 Class period*

Directions 1. *Explain what a cinquain is five-line poems*

2. *Have students write a cinquain about themselves in this fashion*

Title	-	*student's name*
Line 1	-	*two adjectives describing yourself*
Lines 2,3,4	-	*begin each line with an ing verb that tells what you do*
Line 5	-	*other words or a name for yourself*

Example:

KEVIN TRENT
Hardworking and determined.
Serving a ten month sentence.
Getting lost on the way to success.
Making new friends and a new life.
An inmate at Schuylkill County prison.

3. *Use the acrostic (initial letters spelling out the person's first or last name) in order to describe themselves on their feelings about a subject.*

Example:

Can change life
And will do so
Really change
Loving every minute of the transformation

4. *Use limericks to help students get across a message or describe themselves.*
A limerick follows this pattern:

Lines 1,2,5 - *rhyme and contain the same number of beats*

Lines 3 & 4 - *rhyme and contain the same number of beats (usually five)*

Most limericks start like this:
There once was a person named Bill
Who hailed from South of Pottsville
He found drinking sad
But liked one poor lad
And therefore always gave council.

CLASS #14

Objectives

- *Students will learn similes and metaphors and their purpose in poetic writing*
- *Students learn to write poetry using similes and metaphors*

Materials

- *Poetry containing similes and metaphors*
- *Similes and Metaphors example sheets, SM1 and SM2*

Time

- *1 Class period*

1. *Introduce similes and metaphors (SM 1)*
   - *Used to embellish, to illustrate, to make an abstract idea concrete.*
   - *Proceed from known to unknown, from familiar to unfamiliar.*
2. *Students will read poetry containing examples of similes and metaphors that they can analyze in small groups (SM 2)*
3. *Instructor will read selected poetry for prison library and encourage students to use library.*
4. *Have students begin writing their own poetry using similes and metaphors in order to better express their feelings.*

I used to think I was a _____.
But now I know I'm _____.
Because _____.

Completed example:

I used to think I was **a yacht** *(metaphor)*
But now I know I'm **surely not**
Because **I'm not always sailing** *(metaphor)*
through life smoothly like a boat. *(simile)*

CLASS #15, #16, #17

Objectives

- *Students will review types of writing studied and practiced*
- *Students will review purpose of class*
- *Students will review community service ideas*
- *Students will choose one or more types of writing and create projects utilizing their favorite witing styles.*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*

Time

1. *Have students write one or more creative writing piece(s) as a group, clearly stating:*
   a. *type of writing*
   b. *purpose*
2. *Have students elect a class recorder who will write, revise and edit the group project and a group reporter who will read completed piece or pieces to the whole class*

CLASS #18 & #19

Objectives

- *Students will assimilate concepts related to stress e.g. "do you consider stress a "mess" or a "test?"*
- *Students will personalize these concepts*
- *Students will demonstrate ability to communicate their past dealings with stress that led to problems*
- *Students will demonstrate how learning situations have led them to more positive methods of dealing with stress*

Time

2 Classes

Materials:

Pens, pencils, paper

Directions

1. *Take inventory of sources of stress in life. (Put on board sources of stress/reasons why this is stressful).*
2. *List stress reactions such as:*
   - *anger, rage*
   - *anxiety, fear*
   - *guilt, shame, humiliation*
   - *frustration*
   - *panic*
   - *jealousy*
   - *insecurity*
   - *hopelessness*
   - *helplessness*
   - *worry*
3. *Teach students 4 positive concepts of dealing with stress: (draw from students and write on board)*
   - *Keep healthy in mind and body*
   - *Judge reality accurately*
   - *Plan for possible stressful situations*
   - *Be able to identify stressful situations*
   - *learn to relax*
4. *Assign students to write a paper on stress. They should identify causes of frequency of stress in their lives as they are now as incarcerated adults. They should explore options for dealing with stress and various ways to make adjustments that can help them either to lower stress, prevent it, or to deal positively with it.*

5. *Students should perform a related writing assignment - use the same topic only putting themselves into their past and how they **should have** dealt with stress (from what they now know) as opposed to **how they actually did**; included in this writing assignment is their imagined projection into the outside after parole, imagining the stresses that they can expect to confront and how they plan to handle it.*

   One of the inmates drives you crazy. You would like to hit him, but they will put you in lock-up. Handle this situation in a positive and productive manner.

6. *Role play situation: turn a stressful situation into a solvable problem.*

CLASSES #20 thru #29

Objectives

- *Students will evaluate their own course writings and begin to choose which works to include in the class book*
- *Students will learn to write evaluations*
- *Students will focus on course goals*
- *Students will independently choose topics and writing styles and then write as many self-assigned projects which they wish to include in the final book draft*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*
  Student folders with all writings

Directions

1. *Students will pick out one of their writing assignments from their folders as their "best".*
2. *Student will write a one sheet evaluation evaluating their works on the following points:*
   - *adherence to main topic*
   - *how closely the piece meets the needs of its targeted audience*
3. *Students will then decide, as a result of group discussions upon an appropriate title of the proposed book.*
4. *Students may decide to choose more than one of their writings for the book.*
5. *Artistically-oriented students will be encouraged to include topic-appropriate illustrations to be used in conjunction with various pieces.*
6. *Students will decide what they would like to see illustrated on the book cover. The illustration should tie in with the title.*
7. *During these classes, students should be encouraged to write as much as possible on goal related topics in whatever writing form(s) that they choose. After student and instructor evaluations of new writings, new pieces may be added to the book.*

CLASS #30

Objectives

- *Students will be evaluated on progress in writing*
- *Students gain in knowledge of "community service", will be measured.*
- *Students change in self-esteem will be measured.*

Materials

- *Paper and pens/pencils*
  Community Service Survey
  Self-Evaluation Survey

Time

1 Class period

Directions

1. *Students will write an essay on a goal-related subject (e.g. I have helped another human being; why this class has helped me look inward and forward) which will be evaluated by the same pre-selected team of adult instructors who evaluated the first assignment.*
2. *Students will once again complete the survey on community service.*
3. *Students will again complete the self-esteem instrument.*
4. *Each student will be presented with a "rough copy" of the finished booklet, with the final draft presented or mailed to them in approximately three weeks.*

LSI

GUIDELINES FOR BEING A GOOD LISTENER

1. **Give all of your attention to the person who is talking.**
   The listener maintains eye contact with the speaker. Also, the listener does not break the focus on the speaker by interrupting, telling his or her own stories, or giving his or her own feelings.

2. **Pay attention to the <u>feelings</u> of the speaker as well as to the <u>content</u> of what is said.**

3. **Make the speaker feel that you <u>understand</u> what is being said, both the <u>content</u> and the <u>feelings</u>.**
   Do this by repeating what the speaker has said in your own words to show that you have listened and understood.

4. **Avoid <u>obstacles</u> to good listening such as making judgments or offering advice!**

5. **Listen without interrupting.**
   Nods, smiles, and expressions of understanding help show acceptance of the other person. Although the listener may disagree with the speaker, he/she listens respectfully and with interest. Acceptance makes the speaker feel comfortable in continuing to explore thoughts and share experiences.

6. **Help "draw out" the speakers.**

   a. What are some of the reasons that you did that?
   b. How did you feel afterward?
   c. If you could do it over, how would you do it differently?
   d. What do you mean by....?
   e. What happened then?
   f. What do you like about that?
   g. Where did you go then?
   h. What was your reaction to that?
   i. What do you think about that? What are your reasons?
   j. Are you glad about that? What are the reasons?
   k. Have you thought about the possibility that.....?
   l. How do you think things might have been different in that situation?
   m. How do you do that?
   n. What else can you tell me about that?

LS2

A GOOD LISTENER DOES THE FOLLOWING THINGS:

- accepts people as they are
- gives support and encouragement in order to help the speaker take positive action
- respects confidentiality
- helps people see alternatives for decision-making
- helps the speaker feel comfortable, open and trusting towards him or her
- refers people to community organizations for help

A GOOD LISTENER DOES NOT:

- dominate, preach, or tell people what to do
- judge people or try to change them
- give advice or offer solutions
- do for a person what the person should do independently
- put people down
- gossip about what is said in confidence

LS3

SKILLS NEEDED TO BE A GOOD LISTENER

Skills	Examples
Questioning:	. How are you feeling about that? . Tell me more about what happened.
Clarifying:	. Are you saying that you are not sure what you want to do? . It sounds as if you're saying that you're angry with your friend because he told someone something that you considered confidential. Is that right?
Reflecting:	. You are really unhappy about . . . . . You want to stop drinking because . . . .
Understanding:	. This problem must be very difficult for you. . That sounds like you're really in an uncomfortable situation.
Summarizing:	. It sounds as if you have conflicting feelings about this situation. You want to stop drinking but the other difficult situations that you are facing make you want to drink even more.

LS4

OBSERVATIONS IN COMMUNICATIONS

by Carl Rogers

"But what I really dislike in myself is when I cannot hear the other person because I am so sure in advance of what he is about to say and I don't listen. It is only afterward that I realize that I have only heard what I have already decided he is saying. I have failed really to listen. Or even worse are those times I catch myself trying to twist his message to make it say what I want to say, and then only hearing that. This can be a very subtle thing and it is surprising how skillful I can be in doing it. Just by twisting his words as small amount, by distorting his meaning just a little, I can make it appear that he is not only saying the thing I want to hear, but that he is the person I want him to be. It is only when I realize through his protest or through my own gradual recognition that I am subtly manipulating him that I become disgusted with myself. I know too, from being on the receiving end of this, how frustrating it is to be perceived for what you are not, to be heard saying something which you have not said. This creates anger and bafflement and disillusionment.

"...I am terribly frustrated and shut into myself when I try to express something which is deeply me, which is a part of my own private, inner world, and the other person does not understand. When I take the gamble, the risk of trying to share something that is very personal with another individual and it is not received and not understood, this is a very deflating and a very lonely experience."

LS5

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice,
you have not done what I asked.
When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me
why I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to
do something to solve my problem,
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I asked was that you listen,
not talk, or do...just hear.
Advice is cheap: twenty cents will get you both
Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the same newspaper.
And I can do for myself. I'm not helpless.
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.
When you do something for me that I can and need
to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.
But when you accept, as a simple fact, that I do feel,
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you
and get about the business of understanding
what's behind this irrational feeling.
And when that's clear, the answers are obvious
and I don't need advice. Irrational feelings make sense when
we understand what's behind them.
So please listen and just hear me. And if you want
to talk, wait a minute for your turn,
and I'll listen to you.

Ray Houghton, M.D.
Berkeley, CA

TR1

Charles Lynch, Sr. left school in eleventh grade, unable to read above first grade level. Like many functional illiterates of the early sixties, he had been placed in special education classes. He was discouraged with his lack of progress and used the excuse of his mother's illness and family problems to escape a "no-win" situation. Charles was ill prepared to face the future. He dreaded and tried to avoid any situation where he would need to read. It took him over a year just to memorize the information required to pass the written driver's exam. For twenty years, this inability to read has embarrassed him and cost him numerous jobs and opportunities for advancement.

In the fall of 1986, while working as a custodian for the Cumberland Valley School District, Charles heard about the local adult program and sought help from administrator he knew. After listening to his difficulties, the administrator contacted the Cumberland County Literacy Council and Charles was assigned a tutor. Charles worked the evening shift at the high school and, instead of going to dinner, he would meet his tutor for reading instruction. When they began working together, he was reading at about a third grade level.

After two years of hard work, Charles can now read at high school level. He has learned to enjoy different kinds of reading, from James Thurber to Reader's Digest to Greek Tragedy. In September 1987, he entered the school district's competency-based high school diploma program. Through tremendous effort, he managed to complete all the requirements of this program, continue his tutoring, and work full-time. On June 6, 1988, he received a district high school diploma.

The ability to read and receive a high school diploma has improved his confidence, his self-concept, and his life. Charles has excellent mechanical skills but previously would not apply for any mechanic's position because he could not read technical manuals. Recently, he got a job as a mechanic at a local automobile dealership, increasing his earnings from $3.25 to $8.50 an hour. Now he can read complex service manuals. He was recently chosen by his employer to attend a General Motors course on transmissions and is confident that he has the academic skills needed to be successful.

An active supporter of both the school district's adult education program and the local literacy council, Charles is happy to be recognized and share his successes with others. He is looking forward to taking a computer programming course at the high school. As busy as he is, he still finds time to give to his church and serves as superintendent of their Sunday School.

TR2

Once abandoned, abused, addicted and ambitionless, Sandra Lawrence now works full-time as a travel agent, planning corporate and group travel. She also helps out part-time in a New Hope crafts shop, hoping to learn more about the crafts she sells.

The mother of four children, Sandy is in her first year at Montgomery Community College. She is working toward an associate degree in Physical Education. Her next goal is to attend a college in Seattle, Washington, which offers a bachelor's degree in Holistic Health. Toward that end, she is training to be an aerobics instructor at a fitness center associated with Montgomery Hospital.

Looking at this busy career woman, it is hard to envision her past. Abandoned at two, farmed out from home to home, Sandy was thrown out of an Institute for Girls at fifteen. Pregnant at nineteen, she married and had four children in five years. Her husband, an alcoholic and drug dealer, abused her. She took to drugs as a solution to her pain and years of rejection.

By the late 1970s, Sandy was divorced and laden with financial burdens. Her life was out of control. She was found wandering the streets by the police and hospitalized briefly. She had several car accidents, dislocating her knee in one and fracturing both ankles, her skull and sternum in another. Because of her extensive drug history, she lost her work, friends, and family support.

In August 1986, her daughter brought Sandy to Eagleville Hospital. There, as part of her treatment, she attended GED classes. Unsure of herself, she would question, question, question and then absorb like a sponge. Her biggest obstacle, was her poor self-image. She saw herself differently when she received her GED diploma, September 1986. Five months later, she left the program with a future - her sobriety, her GED, a job and hope.

Now forty-four, Sandy enjoys her work at the travel agency and is looking forward to planning a tour for a Narcotics Anonymous convention next July. Education helped her realize people do care and that she has a future. Sandy is now reaching out and influencing others. She is an active member of a college support group for older people returning to school. She speaks to Alocholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups whenever she is sought out and is currently sponsoring two recovering women. "AA is my social life," she says. Three of her four children are back in school, one in college and two in night school. They see her as a role model and are proud of her.

TR3

Confined to a wheelchair, his physical movement restricted, Lansford Knapp has struggled all his life to overcome the difficulties caused by muscular dystrophy. Lanny attended a school for the physically disabled until the tenth grade, when health problems caused him to leave. Although he received home tutoring, it was not consistent or thorough enough for him to earn a high school diploma or a GED.

He enrolled in a rehabilitation program and acquired skills in the field of electronics. Blessed with a keen eye and a fine aptitude for mechanics, he developed his motor dexterity to its utmost and was hired as a maintenance man, repairing heating unit elements and air-conditioners. When Lanny moved to Pennsylvania in the late 1970s, he was hired by an instrument company to assemble and solder power supplies and control circuits. When cutbacks came in 1980, he lost his job.

In 1983, he was faced with multiple health problems, such as arthritis, frequent and severe winter colds, and debilitating emphysema, as well as MD. Realizing that his mother's back problems and cardiac condition made caring for him nearly impossible, Lanny became a resident of Inglis House, a Philadelphia home for disabled persons. There, he began GED studies and, in little more than a year, earned his GED, with a 276, well over the minimum score in every section. In 1986, he enrolled in a General Studies program offered in the Home through a joint venture with a community college.

In 1987, when the Home purchased computers, Lanny really found his niche. Each weekend and two nights a week, he tutors other students. He helps to maintain the computer equipment and has learned about adaptive devices used to help the disabled use computers. Lanny has maintained a 3.6 grade average. He hopes to graduate with honors in Data Processing and regain full-time employment.

Lanny joined the Home's Ham Radio Club and earned licenses at various levels. As a ham radio operator, he helps keep lines of communication open in times of crises. During the Mexican earthquake and the Jamaican hurricane, he enabled people in his community to contact family in those stricken areas. Lanny serves on the Home's Resident Council, acting as an advocate for residents and advisors. He also delivers the mail. For some residents, this is their one personal contact with people and concerns inside the house. In all these activities, Lanny has overcome vast difficulties in health in order to succeed academically and as a person.

SA 1

"Father, dear father, come home with me now,
The clock in the steeple strikes one."
Henry Clay Work (18 32-84)
A temperance sing. **Come Home, Father**

"He who drinks a little too much drinks much too much."
Proverb

"Who could have foretold from the structure of
the brain, that wine could damage its functions?"
Hypocrites (c. 460-c 366 BC.)

"Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a
drunken Christian."
Herman Melville (18 19-91)
U.S. Novelist
Moby Dick Ch. 3

"Drunkenness is temporary suicide. The happiness
that it brings is merely negative, a momentary
cessation of unhappiness.
Bertranet Russell
The conquest of Happiness

"They know enough who knows how to learn."
Henry Brooks, Adams
(1838-1918) U.S. historian

"Ask the young: They know everything:
Joubert

"An unfulfilled vocation drains the color
from a man's entire existence."
Balzac

SA 2

"First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes the man."

Proverb

"When the wine is in, the wit is out."

Proverb

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.

Bibb: Proverbs 23:31-32

"Drunkenness is never anything but a substitute for happiness."

Andre Gido (1869-1951)

"Drunkenness...spoils health, dismounts the mind, and unmans men."

William Penn (1648-1718)
English founder of PA

"Drunkenness is simply voluntary insanity."

Seneca (c. 4 BC. - AD65)
Roman writer

"Up to a certain point every man is what he thinks he is."

F. H. Bradley

"Experiences is a fine teacher, but she sends in terrific bills."

Ninna Antreim, 1902

"Men despise great projects when they do not feel themselves capable of great successes.

Vauvenargues

"Failure is not the only punishment for laziness: there is also the success of others."

Jules Renard, 1898

SA 3

"Nothing will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome."
Dr. Johnson, Rasselas, 1759

"A stumble may prevent a fall."
Thomas Fuller 1732

"Life is a maze in which we take the wrong turn before we have learned to walk."
Cyril Connolly, 1944

"What ought not be done do not even think of doing."
Epicetus

"Never exchange a good conscience for the good will of others, or to avoid their ill-will.
Charles Simmons

"Let us endeavor to live that when we die even the undertakers will be sorry."
Mark Twain

"Never change a winning game; always change a losing one."
Bell Tilde

"Above all, challenge yourself. You may well surprise yourself at what strengths you have, what you can accomplish."
Cecile M. Springer

"Remember your past mistakes just long enough to profit by them.
Dave McKinnon

"No matter how far you have gone on a wrong road, turn back."
Turkish proverb

"The Athenians, alarmed at the internal, decoy of their Republic, asked Demosthenes what to do. His reply: "Do not do what you are doing now."
Joseph Fay

SA 4

Success is relative:
It is what we can make of the mess we have made of things.

T. S. Eliot, 1939

"The best way out is always through."

Robert Frat, 1914

"We must face what we fear, that is the case of the core of the restoration of health."

Max Lerner

"If your conscience won't stop you, pray for cold feet." (Anonymous)

"We all need somebody to talk to. It would be good if we talked to each other - not just pitter-patter, but real talk. We shouldn't be afraid because most people really like this contract; that you show you are vulnerable makes them free to be vulnerable too. It's so much easier to be together when we drop our masks."

Liv Dillman

"If we are not our brother's keeper, let us at least not be his executioner."

Marlon Brando

"Keep company with those who may make you better."

English saying

"Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped.

African proverb

"Remember, even monkeys fall out of trees."

Korean proverb

"Success is not permanent and failure is not fatal."

(Anonymous)

102

SM1

Similes and metaphors are two major figures of speech used in much poetry.

A **simile** *is a comparison of one thing to another using* <u>like</u> *or as. Some similes are used so often that they become cliches:*

Example: *"I am hungry* <u>as</u> *a bear.*

"He's sly <u>like</u> *a fox".*

The object of poetic simile is to think of similes which have never been used so as to allow the author to better express his/her feelings

"The quiet thoughts of two people
a long time in love touch lightly
<u>like birds</u> *nesting in each others*
warmth."
(Hugh Prather <u>Notes on Love and Courage</u>

A **metaphor** *is an implied or suggested comparison between two things. It does* <u>not</u> *use "like" or "as".*

Examples:

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
<u>Life is a broken-winged bird</u>
That cannot fly.
(From <u>Dreams</u> *by Langston Hughes)*

"I am a rock.
I am an island."
("I am a Rock" Simon and Garfunkle)

SM2

The following poems are excerpts from **The Prophet** *by Kahlik Kibran*

Then said Almitra, Speak to us of Love.
And he raised his head and looked upon
the people, and there fell a stillness
upon them. And with a great voice he said:
When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield
to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions
may wound you.
And when he speaks to you believe in him,
Though his voice may shatter your dreams
as the north wind lay waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall he
crucify you. Even as he is for your growth
so is he for your pruning.
Even as he ascends to your height and
caresses your tenderest branches that
quiver in the sun,
So shall he descend to your roote and
shake them in their clinging to the earth.

Like sheaves of corn he gathers you
unto himself.
He threshes you to make you naked.
He sifts you to free you from your husks.
He grinds you to whiteness.
He kneads you until you are pliant;
And then he assigns you to his sacred
fire, that you may become sacred bread
for God's sacred feast.

All these things shall love do unto you
that you may know the secrets of your
heart, and in that knowledge become a
fragment of Life's heart.

But if in your fear you would seek only
love's peace and love's pleasure,
Then it is better for you that you cover
your nakedness and pass out of love's
threshing-floor,
Into the seasonless world where you
shall laugh, but not all of your laughter,
and weep, but not all of your tears.

SM2 (Continued)

Love gives naught but itself and takes
naught but from itself.
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;
For love is sufficient unto love.

When you love you should not say, "God
is in my heart," but rather, "I am in
the heart of God."
And think not you can direct the course
of love, for love, if it finds you worthy,
directs your course.

Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself.
But if you love and must needs have desires,
let these be your desires;
To meet and be like a running brook that sings
its melody to the night.
To know the pain of too much tenderness.
To be wounded by your own understanding of love;
And to bleed willingly and joyfully.
To wake at dawn with a winged heart and give
thanks for another day of loving;
To rest at the noon hour and mediate love's
ecstasy;
To return home at eventide with gratitude;
And then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved
in your heart and a song of praise upon your lips.

Then a lawyer said, But what of our Laws, master?
And he answered:
You delight in laying down laws,
Yet you delight more in breaking them.
Like children playing by the ocean who build
sand-towers with constancy and then destroy
them with laughter.
But while you build your sand-towers the
ocean brings more sand to the shore,
And when you destroy them the ocean laugns
with you.
Verily the ocean laughs always with the innocent.

But what of those to whom life is not an ocean,
and man-made laws are not sand-towers,
But to whom life is a rock, and the law a
chisel with which they would carve it in
their own likeness?
What of the cripple who hates dancers?
What of the ox who loves his yoke and
deems the elk and deer of the forest stray
and vagrant things?
What of the old serpent who cannot shed his

SM2 (Continued)

skin, and calls all others naked and shameless?
And of him who comes early to the wedding-feast, and when over-fed and tired goes his way saying that all feasts are violation and feasters lawbreakers?

What shall I say of these save that they too stand in the sunlight, but with their backs to the sun?
They see only their shadows, and their shadows are their laws.
And what is the sun to them but a caster of shadows?
And what is to acknowledge the laws but to stoop down and trace their shadows upon the earth?
But you who walk facing the sun, what images drawn on the earth can hold you?
You who travel with the wind, what weather-vane shall direct your course?
What man's law shall bind you if you break your yoke but upon no man's prison door?
What laws shall you fear if you dance but stumble against no man's iron chains?
And who is he that shall bring you to judgment if you tear off your garments yet leave it in no man's path?

People of Orphalese, you can muffle the drum, and you can loosen the strings of the lyre, but who shall command the skylark not to sing?

Then a woman said, Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow.
And he answered:
Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.
And how else can it be?
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your

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SM2 (Continued)

heart and you shall find it is only that
which has given the sorrow that is giving
you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your
heart, and you shall see that in truth you
are weeping for that which has been your
delight.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow,"
and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."

But I say unto you, they are inseparable.
Together they come, and when one sits alone
with you at your board, remember that the
other is asleep upon your bed.

Verily you are suspended like scales between
your sorrow and your joy.
Only when you are empty are you at standstill
and balanced.
When the treasure-keeper lifts you to weigh
his gold and his sliver, needs must your joy
or sorrow rise or fall.

And a woman spoke, saying, Tell us of Pain.
And he said:
Your pain is the breaking of the stall that
encloses your understanding.
Even as the stone of the fruit must break,
that its heart may stand in the sun, so must
you know pain.
And could you keep your heart in wonder at the
daily miracles of your life, your pain would
not seem less wondrous than your joy;
And you would accept the seasons of your heart,
even as you have always accepted the seasons
that pass over your fields.
And you would watch with serenity through
the winters of your grief.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.
It is the bitter potion by which the physician
within you heals your sick self.
Therefore trust the physician, and drink
his remedy in silence and tranquillity:
For his hand, though heavy and hard, is
guided by the tender hand of the Unseen,
And the cup he brings, though it burn
your lips, has been fashioned of the clay
which the Potter has moistened with His own sacred tears.

PROJECT 353 1991-92
WRITING/COMMUNICATIONS FOR INCARCERATED ADULTS

WRITING SAMPLE EVALUATION SCALE

	POINTS
Goal-Appropriate Topic	10
Adherence to topic	10
Sentence Development	10
Paragraph development	10
Syntax	10
Clarity of expression	10
Punctuation	10
Creativity in style and expression	5
Aptness of title	5
Legibility	5
Spelling	5
TOTAL	90

SELF EVALUATION SURVEY

(TRUE or FALSE, in your opinion)

1. I feel that I am a good person. _____
2. I feel that I have the ability to improve myself. _____
3. I enjoy helping others. _____
4. I am good at listening to others' problems. _____
5. I feel that I am as good as other people. _____
6. I appreciate myself for the good that I have done for others. _____
7. I feel that I have talent to offer to the world. _____
8. I would make sacrifices in order to make life better for another human being. _____
9. I would like to have a friend who is like me. _____
10. I feel that I am a person worthy of the respect of others. _____

COMMUNITY SERVICE SURVEY

Name _____

Date _____

1. **Community Service is** _____

_____

_____

_____

2. **Five examples of organized community service are:** _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. **Five community organizations that can be found in our area and the services that they provide are:**

Organizations	**Services provided**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. **I think that I would like to help** _____
(one type of person or a group)
when I am released from prison in the following way (s):

_____

_____

_____

5. **I have the most empathy for people who have the following problems:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. **Five types of community service that I could perform on my own without being involved in an organization:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Schuylkill Intermediate Unit
Serving the Needs of Education

ROBERT M. ALSPACH, Ed. D.
Executive Director

RALPH W. MORGAN, Ed. D.
Assistant Executive Director

During a ten week period beginning in January, 1992 and ending March, 1992, I participated in a demonstration project for the Schuylkill Intermediate Unit #29. The project's goal was to produce a booklet of personal writings composed by all of us in this course. The booklet would then be distributed to "at-risk" students in the county through the Intermediate Unit.

During this time some of us gave testimonials that were videotaped in order to be used in substance abuse prevention programs in various schools and also in some community presentations in order to heighten awareness of the ever-present drug/alcohol menace to our county youth.

I, _____, presently an inmate in
(Name)
Schuylkill County Prison, give my consent to use my writings on the negative aspects of substance abuse and/or dropping out of school, to be used in the county and around the state to help youth and adults learn more about the dangers involved in these practices.

I, _____, presently an inmate in
(Name)
The Schuylkill County Prison grant my permission to use my video testimonial to be used in programs in the county and the state in order to prevent substance abuse of youth and to enlighten adults of the dangers to which their children may be exposed.

_____
(Date)

BOX 130, MAR LIN, PA 17951-0130 • (717) 544-9131 • FAX 717-544-6412
"We are an Equal Rights and Opportunity Intermediate Unit."

SAMPLE RECRUITMENT FLYER

New and Experimental Class to be offered by the Schuylkill Intermediate Unit

WHO: Inmates who have had drug and/or alcohol related problems which contributed in some way to their imprisonment.

Inmates who dropped out of school before graduation and have had difficulties because of this. (Even if they have since earned a GED)

Inmates who fit into one or both of the above categories and have a strong desire to help today's teenagers through their experiences.

WHY: Learn to express yourself through writing and verbal communications.

Make a contribution to society through helping today's youth by sharing your own experiences.

WHERE: Prison library

WHEN: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
12:30 - 2:30 p.m. beginning
January through the end of March

If you are interested, please register now. The class is limited to a maximum of 20.